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CENT PER CENT SWADESHI
OR
THE ECONOMICS OF VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

BY
M. K. GANDHI



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This is the third edition of the collection of Gandhiji's writings on the subject of economic organization of human society, or the principle of Swadeshi as he shortly termed it. The edition has been revised to bring it up-to-date; and articles which were chronologically arranged in the previous edition have been rearranged with an eye to the subject matter. Gandhiji's own writings are collected in the first part of the book; and what the late M. D. and others wrote on the subject is collected in the second. An index at the end will be helpful to students. We hope the book will help those who think and plan for the economic progress and well-being of our country at present. Let it not be forgotten that while the world at large is chiefly planning for *armed* peace, (if that is ever possible), Gandhiji, in everything that he said or suggested by way of economic planning, planned on the firm basis of the dignity of human labour and love and concord that every human heart really hankers for. His was the way of planning for peace and plenty without in any way compromising the cause of peace and concord on earth. We, his countrymen, owe it to him to see that this mission of his bears fruit even after he is gone from our midst. These writings are intended to help us in that endeavour.

3-5-1948

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CENT PER CENT SWADESHI

A NEW ORIENTATION

[During the last few months Gandhiji has been approached by several workers in Swadeshi for a comprehensive definition of Swadeshi for their guidance. In trying to prepare an exhaustive definition and in the course of discussion with co-workers in the extreme South, he discovered that such a definition was almost impossible and that Swadeshi was its own definition. It was a spirit that was daily growing and undergoing variations. Any attempt at a definition must fail and was likely to retard the evolution of the Swadeshi spirit. He therefore suggested the following workable formula for the guidance of the All India Swadeshi League and kindred organizations :

" For the purpose of the All India Swadeshi League Swadeshi covers useful articles manufactured in India through small industries which are in need of popular education for their support and which will accept the guidance of the All India Swadeshi League in regulating prices and in the matter of the wages and welfare of labour under their control. Swadeshi will, therefore, exclude articles manufactured through the large and organized industries which are in no need of the services of the All India Swadeshi League and which can or do command State aid."

This formula created consternation among the workers. The result was a discussion between some members of the League and Gandhiji at Bombay during his visit in the course of the Harijan tour in June 1934. The following is the gist of what Gandhiji said.

C. S. |

" My formula, as stated clearly, is for the guidance of the Swadeshi League. It does not purport to cover the whole field of Swadeshi. It is only by way of suggestion to the League to restrict the scope of its work to the encouragement and propagation of minor, particularly home, industries to the exclusion of major, organized ones. The object of making this suggestion is not to decry major

industries or to ignore the benefit those industries have bestowed, and in future may bestow, on the country. But a body like the Swadeshi League need not become the self-appointed advertising agents of those industries as it has hitherto been. They have ample resources at their command, and they are well able to take care of themselves. The spirit of Swadeshi has been sufficiently generated, and it helps them without any effort of Swadeshi organizations. These, if they are to be useful, have to concentrate their attention on struggling industries. Any attempt to advertise the wares of large, organized industries can only result in sending up prices. This will be unjust to the consumer. It is waste of effort to bring into being philanthropic organization to help a successful business organization. We may not delude ourselves with the belief that our efforts have helped the growth and advancement of those industries. It will be a cheap self-satisfaction not substantiated by facts. I recall a conversation I had with Fazalbhai in 1920 when I was on the eve of launching the movement of Swadeshi. He characteristically said to me, 'If you, Congressmen, become advertising agents of ours, you will do no good to the country except to put a premium on our wares and to raise the prices of our manufactures.' His argument was sound. But he was nonplussed when I informed him that I was to encourage handspun and handwoven *khadi* which had been woefully neglected and which needed to be revived if the starving and unemployed millions were to be served.

But *khadi* is not the only such struggling industry. I therefore suggest to you to direct your attention and effort to all the small-scale, minor, unorganized industries that are today in need of public support. They may be wiped out if no effort is made in their behalf. Some of these are being pushed back by large-scale industries which flood the markets with their manufactures. It is these that cry for your help.

Take the sugar industry. The largest major industry next to the textile is that of the manufacture of sugar. It stands in no need of our assistance. Sugar factories are fast multiplying. Popular agencies have done little to help the

growth of this industry. It is indebted for its growth to favourable legislation. And today the industry is so prosperous and expanding that the production of jaggery is becoming a thing of the past. It is admittedly superior to refined sugar in nutritive value. It is this very valuable cottage industry that cries out for your help. This by itself furnishes large scope for research and substantial help. We have to investigate the ways and means of keeping it alive. This is but an illustration of what I mean.

I have no doubt in my mind that we add to the national wealth if we help the small-scale industries. I have no doubt also that true Swadeshi consists in encouraging and reviving these home industries. That alone can help the dumb millions. It also provides an outlet for the creative faculties and resourcefulness of the people. It can also usefully employ hundreds of youths in the country who are in need of employment. It may harness all the energy that at present runs to waste. I do not want any one of those who are engaged in more remunerative occupations to leave them and take to the minor industries. Just as I did with regard to the spinning wheel, I would ask only those who suffer from unemployment and penury to take to some of these industries and add a little to their slender resources.

It will thus be seen that the change in activity that I have suggested to you does in no way conflict with the interests of the major industries. I want to say only this much that you, national servants, will restrict your activities to the minor industries and let the major ones help themselves as they are doing today. The minor industries I conceive will not replace the major ones, but will supplement them. I aspire even to induce the owners of large industries to take interest in this work which is purely humanitarian. I am a well-wisher of the mill-owners too, and they will bear me out when I say that I have not failed to help them when I could." *

* Published in the Press in July, 1934.

SWADESHI

Swadeshi is the law of laws enjoined by the present age. Spiritual laws like Nature's laws need no enacting; they are self-acting. But through ignorance or other causes man often neglects or disobeys them. It is then that vows are needed to steady his course. A man who is by temperament a vegetarian needs no vow to strengthen his vegetarianism. For the sight of animal food, instead of tempting him would only excite his disgust. The law of Swadeshi is ingrained in the basic nature of man, but it has today sunk into oblivion. Hence the necessity for the vow of Swadeshi. In its ultimate and spiritual sense, Swadeshi stands for the final emancipation of the soul from her earthly bondage. For this earthly tabernacle is not her natural or permanent abode; it is a hindrance in her onward journey; it stands in the way of her realizing her oneness with all life. A votary of Swadeshi, therefore, in his striving to identify himself with the entire creation, seeks to be emancipated from the bondage of the physical body.

If this interpretation of Swadeshi be correct, then it follows, that its votary will, as a first duty, dedicate himself to the service of his immediate neighbours. This involves exclusion or even sacrifice of the interests of the rest, but the exclusion or the sacrifice would be only in appearance. Pure service of our neighbours can never, from its very nature, result in disservice to those who are far away, but rather the contrary. 'As with the individual, so with the universe' is an unfailing principle, which we would do well to lay to heart. On the other hand, a man who allows himself to be lured by 'the distant scene', and runs to the ends of the earth for service, is not only foiled in his ambition, but also fails in his duty towards his neighbours. Take a concrete instance. In the particular place where I live, I have certain persons as my neighbours, some relations and dependents. Naturally, they all feel, as they have a right to, that they have claim on me, and look to me for

help and support. Suppose now I leave them all at once, and set out to serve people in a distant place. My decision would throw my little world of neighbours and dependents out of gear, while my gratuitous knight-errantry would, more likely than not, disturb the atmosphere in the new place. Thus a culpable neglect of my immediate neighbours, and an unintended disservice to the people whom I wish to serve, would be the first fruits of my violation of the principles of Swadeshi.

It is not difficult to multiply such instances. That is why the Gita says: 'It is best to die performing one's own duty or *swadharma*: *paradharma* or another's duty is fraught with danger'. Interpreted in terms of one's physical environment, this gives us the law of Swadeshi. What the Gita says with regard to *swadharma* equally applies to Swadeshi, for Swadeshi is *swadharma* applied to one's immediate environment.

It is only when the doctrine of Swadeshi is wrongly understood, that mischief results. For instance, it would be a travesty of the doctrine of Swadeshi, if to coddle my family I set about grabbing money by all means fair or foul. The law of Swadeshi requires no more of me than to discharge my legitimate obligations towards my family by just means, and the attempt to do so will reveal to me the universal code of conduct. The practice of Swadeshi can never do harm to any one, and if it does, it is not *swadharma* but egotism that moves me.

There may arise occasions, when a votary of Swadeshi may be called upon to sacrifice his family at the altar of universal service. Such an act of willing immolation will then constitute the highest service rendered to the family. 'Whosoever saveth his life shall lose it, and whosoever loseth his life for the Lord's sake shall find it' holds good for the family group no less than for the individual. Take another instance. Supposing there is an outbreak of plague in my village, and in trying to serve the victims of the epidemic, I, my wife and children and all the rest of my family are wiped out of existence; then in inducing those

dearest and nearest to join me, I will not have acted as the destroyer of my family, but on the contrary as its truest friend. In Swadeshi there is no room for selfishness; or if there is selfishness in it, it is of the highest type, which is not different from the highest altruism. Swadeshi in its purest form is the acme of universal service.

It was by following this line of argument, that I hit upon *khadi* as the necessary and the most important corollary of the principle of Swadeshi in its application to society. 'What is the kind of service,' I asked myself, 'that the teeming millions of India most need at the present time, that can be easily understood and appreciated by all, that is easy to perform and will at the same time enable the crores of our semi-starved countrymen to live?' and the reply came, that it is the universalizing of *khadi* or the spinning-wheel alone, that can fulfil these conditions.

Let no one suppose, that the practice of Swadeshi through *khadi* would harm the foreign or Indian mill-owners. A thief, who is weaned from his vice, or is made to return the property that he has stolen, is not harmed thereby. On the contrary, he is the gainer, consciously in the one case, unconsciously in the other. Similarly, if all the opium addicts or drunkards in the world were to shake themselves free from their vice, the canteen keepers or the opium vendors, who would be deprived of their custom, could not be said to be losers. They would be the gainers in the truest sense of the word. The elimination of the wages of sin is never a loss either to the individual concerned or to society; it is pure gain.

It is the greatest delusion to suppose, that the duty of Swadeshi begins and ends with merely spinning some yarn anyhow and wearing *khadi* made from it. *Khadi* is the first indispensable step towards the discharge of Swadeshi *dharma* to society. But one often meets men, who wear *khadi*, while in all other things they indulge their taste for foreign manufactures. Such men cannot be said to be practising Swadeshi. They are simply following the fashion. A votary of Swadeshi will carefully study his environment, and try

to help his neighbours wherever possible, by giving preference to local manufactures, even if they are of an inferior grade or dearer in price than things manufactured elsewhere. He will try to remedy their defects, but will not because of their defects give them up in favour of foreign manufactures.

But even Swadeshi, like any other good thing, can be ridden to death if it is made a fetish. That is a danger which must be guarded against. To reject foreign manufactures merely because they are foreign, and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion in one's country of manufactures for which it is not suited would be criminal folly, and a negation of the Swadeshi spirit. A true votary of Swadeshi will never harbour illwill towards the foreigner. He will not be actuated by antagonism towards anybody on earth. Swadeshiism is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service, that has its roots in the purest *ahimsa*, i. e. Love.¹

1931

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SWADESHI

Early in the year, if not immediately after my convalescence last year, I was called upon by those who were interested in Swadeshi to frame a definition so as to answer the many difficulties that faced them. I had to bear in mind the various shades of Swadeshi in textiles. I put together the definitions that were suggested. I had correspondence with Shri Shivarao and Shri Jalbhai Naoroji as well as others. I failed to frame a definition that would suit all cases and found that it was impossible to frame an exhaustive definition. As I was travelling far and wide, I had the opportunity of observing things and of seeing how Swadeshi

¹ This note on Swadeshi was not written in Yeravda Mandir in 1930 but outside, after Gandhiji's release in 1931. He did not write it in jail as he felt he would perhaps be unable to do justice to the subject without encroaching upon the forbidden field of politics. The translation was done by Shri Pyarelal — V. G. D.

organizations were functioning. I came to the conclusion that the existing practice was an unconscious fraud upon the public and that many workers of ability were wasting their energy in a vain effort. They were practising self-deception. This strong language, whilst it correctly describes my mental attitude, is not intended to cast any reflection whatsoever upon the workers in Swadeshi organizations. They were doing their best without realizing that they were moving in a vicious circle and labouring under self-deception.

Let me explain what I mean. We were holding exhibitions of things that were in no need of special help or of advertisement for their sale. In their case, our interposition can either stimulate the prices of their wares or set up unhealthy rivalries between flourishing but competing firms.

We may profess to gratuitously help textile, sugar and rice mills and, respectively, kill the village spinning wheel, the handloom and their product, *khadi*, the village cane-crusher and its product, the vitamin-laden and nourishing *gud* or molasses, and the hand-pounder and its product, unpolished rice, whose pericarp, which holds the vitamins, is left intact by these pounders. Our clear duty is, therefore, to investigate the possibility of keeping in existence the village wheel, the village crusher and the village pounder, and, by advertising their products, discovering their qualities, ascertaining the condition of the workers and the number displaced by the power-driven machinery and discovering the methods of improving them, whilst retaining their village character, to enable them to stand the competition of the mills. How terribly and criminally we have neglected them! Here there is no antagonism to the textile or the sugar or the rice mills. Their products must be preferred to the corresponding foreign products. If they were in danger of extinction from foreign competition, they should receive the needed support. But they stand in no such need. They are flourishing in spite of foreign competition. What is needed is protection of the village crafts and the workers behind them from the crushing competition of the power-driven machinery, whether it is worked in India or in

foreign lands. It may be that *khadi*, *gud* and unpolished rice have no intrinsic quality and that they should die. But, except for *khadi*, not the slightest effort has been made, so far as I am aware, to know anything about the fate of the tens of thousands of villagers who were earning their livelihood through crushing cane and pounding rice. Surely, there is in this work enough for an army of patriots. The reader will say, 'But this is very difficult work.' I admit. *But it is most important and equally interesting.* I claim that this is true, fruitful and cent per cent Swadeshi.

But I have as yet merely touched the fringe of the question. I have merely sampled three big organized industries and shown how voluntary Swadeshi agencies need to concentrate their attention solely on the corresponding unorganized village industries that are dying for want of voluntary and intelligent, organized help.

There are numberless other village, and even town, crafts that need public support, if they are to live and thus maintain the thousands of poor artisans depending upon them for their daily bread. Every ounce of work in this direction tells. Every hour given to this work means the sustenance of some deserving workers.

It is my certain conviction that, if work is done on a systematic basis in this direction, the department doing it will become self-supporting, new talent will be stimulated, the educated as well as the uneducated unemployed will find honourable employment without displacing anyone, and crores will be added yearly to the wealth of this country which is getting progressively impoverished.

Here is enough profitable and entertaining work, and to spare, for all the Swadeshi Leagues put together. The recent resolution of the Working Committee on Swadeshi*

* The following resolution was passed by the Working Committee at Benares on 30th July, 1934:

"Doubts having arisen on the Congress policy in regard to Swadeshi, it has become necessary to reaffirm the Congress position on it in unequivocal terms. Notwithstanding what was done during the Civil Resistance struggle, no competition is permissible on Congress platforms

means all this and much more. It provides limitless work for the creative genius in the country

Harijan 10-8-1934

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MORE ON SWADESHI

I would like to resume the thread of my remarks on Swadeshi in *Harijan* of 10th August. Take the special occupations of Harijans. There is a meaning behind the over two thousand Harijan castes. Most of them denote their respective occupations – basket-making, broom-making, rope-weaving, durri-weaving, etc. If a complete list was made of them, they would make an imposing list. They are occupations which either need encouragement, or should be deliberately destroyed if they are useless or unprofitable. But who is to decide whether they are profitable or unprofitable, useless or otherwise? If there was a true Swadeshi organization, it would be its duty to find out the truth about all these innumerable handicrafts and interest itself in these craftsmen. The ink with which I am writing comes from Tenali. It supports about 12 workers. It is making and in Congress exhibitions between mill-made cloth and hand-spun and hand-woven *khadi*. Congressmen are expected to use and encourage the use of only hand-spun and hand-woven *khadi* to the exclusion of any other cloth.

In regard to articles other than cloth the Working Committee adopts the following formula for the guidance of all Congress organizations:

The Working Committee is of opinion that the activities of Congress organizations relating to Swadeshi shall be restricted to useful articles manufactured in India through cottage and other small industries which are in need of popular education for their support and which will accept the guidance of the Congress organizations in regulating prices and in the matter of the wages and welfare of labour under their control.

The formula must not be interpreted to mean any modification of the unbroken policy of the Congress to promote the Swadeshi spirit in the country and to encourage the personal use of only Swadeshi articles. The formula is a recognition of the fact that the large and organized industries which can or do command State aid are in no need of the services of Congress organizations or any Congress effort on their behalf.

headway against odds. I had three more specimens sent to me by different makers, all no doubt struggling like the Tenali group. They interested me. I entered into correspondence with them. But I could do no more for them. A Swadeshi organization will examine the samples of these inks in a scientific manner and guide them and encourage the most promising ones. It is a good and growing industry requiring expert chemical knowledge.

In Cawnpore, a man sent me samples of the paper his friend was manufacturing in a village nearby. I enquired into the concern. It supports about nine men. The paper was stout and glossy. However, it was not good enough for writing. Men engaged in the manufacture are eking out the barest livelihood. The skill is supplied by an old man nearing the crematorium. The whole concern may perish with him, if it is not properly guided. I was told that, if there were enough orders, the paper could be supplied at the same cost as the mill-made article. I know that hand-made paper can never supply the daily growing demand for paper. But lovers of the seven hundred thousand villages and their handicrafts will always want to use handmade paper, if it is easily procurable. Those who use hand-made paper know that it has a charm of its own. Who does not know the famous Ahmedabad paper? What mill-made paper can beat it in durability or polish?

The account books of the old style are still made of that paper. But it is probably a perishing industry like many such others. With a little encouragement, it ought never to perish. If there was supervision, the processes might be improved and the defects that are to be noticed with some of this hand-made paper may be easily removed. The economic condition of the numberless people engaged in these little known trades is well worth investigating. They will surely allow themselves to be guided and advised and feel thankful to those who would take interest in them.

I hope I have given enough illustrations to show how best and uncultivated this field of true Swadeshi is. It is capable of limitless expansion and of producing, without

any capital outlay, new wealth in the country and providing honourable employment to those who are today starving for want of it.

Harjun, 14-9-1934

5

MORE TALKS ON SWADESHI

[Gandhiji's articles on Swadeshi have stimulated quite a lot of independent thinking and must continue to do so until we have had an organization after Gandhiji's heart. A number of friends have seen him on the question, and I should like to summarize the discussion in order to make Gandhiji's position still clearer. — M. D.]

Q. How does this *new* Swadeshi differ from the *old* ?

A. The old emphasized the indigenous nature of the products, irrespective of the method of production or the prospects of the products. I have ruled out organized industries, not because they are *not* Swadeshi, but because they do not need special support. They can stand on their own legs and, in the present state of our awakening, can easily command a market. According to the new orientation, if it is new, I would certainly have our Swadeshi organization to seek out all village industries and find how they are faring. We will have experts and chemists who will be prepared to place their knowledge at the disposal of villagers. We will, through our experts, offer to test the articles manufactured by village handicraftsmen and make them suggestions to improve their wares, and would sell them if they would accept our conditions.

Q. Would you take up any and every handicraft ?

A. Not necessarily. I should examine each one of them, find out their place in the economy of the village life and, if I see that they must be encouraged because of inherent merit, I should do so. Now, for instance, I should be loath to allow the village broom to be replaced by the modern broomstick or brush. I would ask Mrs. Gandhi and other women of the household to tell me about the relative merits of both. Mind you, I would consider the advantages

from all points of view. Thus, the village broom, I should think, must be preferred because it indicates tenderness and kindness to small life, whereas the brush makes a clean sweep of those things. Thus, I should see a whole philosophy behind the broom, for I do not think the Creator makes any distinction between minute insects and (in His estimation) minute men.

Thus I should pick up all kinds of village crafts and industries which are about to die and deserve revival, both because of their intrinsic merit and their other useful aspects, and I should thus go on making discoveries. Take our trifling tooth-sticks, for instance. I am quite sure, if you were to deprive the bulk of the Bombay citizens of their tooth-sticks, their teeth would suffer. I cannot contemplate with equanimity the modern tooth-brush replacing the tooth-stick. These brushes are unhygienic. Once used, they deserve to be thrown away. However much disinfectants you may use to sterilize them, they can never be as good as fresh ones. But the *babul* or *neem* tooth-stick is used once for all and has highly astringent properties. Again, it serves the purpose of a tongue scraper. The West has yet to discover anything so hygienic as the Indian tooth-stick. You may not know that a doctor in South Africa claimed to have controlled tuberculosis among the Bantu miners by insisting on the regular use by them of these tooth-sticks. I would be no party to the advertisement of modern tooth-brushes even when they are made in India. I should declare my preference for the tooth-stick. This is cent per cent Swadeshi. If I take care of it, the rest will take care of itself. Ask me to define the right angle and I should do it easily, but do not ask me to define the angles between the acutest and the most obtuse you can make. If I have the definition of a right angle, I can make whatever angle I need. Though Swadeshi is eloquent enough as its own definition, I have called mine cent per cent Swadeshi, because Swadeshi is in danger of being watered down. Cent per cent Swadeshi gives sufficient scope for the most insatiable ambition for service and can satisfy every kind of talent.

Q. You see Swaraj at the end of it ?

A. Why not ? Once I said in spinning wheel lies Swaraj, next I said in prohibition lies Swaraj. In the same way I would say in cent per cent Swadeshi lies Swaraj. Of course, it is like the blind men describing the elephant. All of them are right and yet not wholly right.

If we tap all our resources, I am quite sure we can be again the richest country in the world, which we were, I suppose, at one time. We can repeat the phenomenon, if we cease to be idle and profitably occupy the idle hours of the millions. All we need is to be industrious, not like a machine, but like the busy bee. You know I am now advertising what I call 'innocent honey' ?

Q. What is that ?

A. Honey scientifically drawn by scientific beekeepers. They keep the bees and make them collect honey without killing them. That is why I call it innocent or non-violent honey. That is an industry which admits of great expansion.

Q. But can you call it absolutely non-violent ? You deprive the bee of its honey, as you deprive the calf of its milk.

A. You are right, but the world is not governed entirely by logic. Life itself involves some kind of violence, and we have to choose the path of least violence. There is violence even in vegetarianism, is there not ? Similarly, if I must have honey, I must be friendly to the bee and get it to yield as much honey as it will. Moreover, in the scientific bee-culture, the bee is never deprived of its honey altogether

Harjan, 28-9-1934

WHAT IS IT ?

An esteemed friend wrote the other day saying, among other things, that he had not before his mind's eye a full picture of what I meant by village industries work. It was a good question. It must have occurred to many people. This is the purport of what I wrote to him :

In a nutshell, of the things we use, we should restrict our purchases to the articles which villages manufacture. Their manufactures may be crude. We must try to induce them to improve their workmanship, and not dismiss them because foreign articles or even articles produced in cities, that is big factories, are superior. In other words, we should evoke the artistic talent of the villager. In this manner shall we repay somewhat the debt we owe to them. We need not be frightened by the thought whether we shall ever succeed in such an effort. Within our own times we can recall instances where we have not been baffled by the difficulty of our tasks when we have known that they were essential for the nation's progress. If, therefore, we as individuals believe that revivification of India's villages is a necessity of our existence, if we believe that thereby only can we root out untouchability and feel one with all, no matter to what community or religion they may belong, we must mentally go back to the villages and treat them as our pattern, instead of putting the city life before them for imitation. If this is the correct attitude, then, naturally, we begin with ourselves and thus use, say, hand-made paper instead of mill-made, use village reed, wherever possible, instead of the fountain pen or the penholder, ink made in the villages instead of the big factories, etc. I can multiply instances of this nature. There is hardly anything of daily use in the home which the villagers have not made before and cannot make even now. If we perform the mental trick and fix our gaze upon them, we immediately put millions of rupees into the pockets of the villagers, whereas at the present moment we are exploiting the villagers without making any return worth the name. It is time we arrested the progress of the

Mechanization is good when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India. I may not use a plough for digging a few square yards of a plot of land. The problem with us is not how to find leisure for the teeming millions inhabiting our villages. The problem is how to utilize their idle hours, which are equal to the working days of six months in the year. Strange as it may appear, every mill generally is a menace to the villagers. I have not worked out the figures, but I am quite safe in saying that every mill-hand does the work of at least ten labourers doing the same work in their villages. In other words, he earns more than he did in his village at the expense of ten fellow villagers. Thus spinning and weaving mills have deprived the villagers of a substantial means of livelihood. It is no answer in reply to say that they turn out cheaper, better cloth, if they do so at all. For, if they have displaced thousands of workers the cheapest mill cloth is dearer than the dearest *khadi* woven in the villages. Coal is not dear for the coal miner who can use it there and then nor is *khadi* dear for the villager who manufactures his own *khadi*. But if the cloth manufactured in mills displaces village hands, rice mills and flour mills not only displace thousands of poor women workers, but damage the health of the whole population in the bargain. Where people have no objection to taking flesh diet and can afford it, white flour and polished rice may do no harm, but in India, where millions can get no flesh diet even where they have no objection to eating it if they can get it, it is sinful to deprive them of nutritious and vital elements contained in whole wheat meal and unpolished rice. It is time medical men and others combined to instruct the people on the danger attendant upon the use of white flour and polished rice.

I have drawn attention to some broad glaring facts to show that the way to take work to the villagers is not through mechanization but that it lies through revival of the industries they have hitherto followed.

Hence the function of the All India Village Industries Association must, in my opinion, be to encourage the existing industries and to revive, where it is possible and desirable, the dying or dead industries of villages according to the village methods, i. e. the villagers working in their own cottages as they have done from times immemorial. These simple methods can be considerably improved as they have been in hand-ginning, hand-carding, hand-spinning and hand-weaving.

A critic objects that the ancient plan is purely individualistic and can never bring about corporate effort. This view appears to me to be very superficial. Though articles may be manufactured by villagers in their cottages, they can be pooled together and profits divided. The villagers may work under supervision and according to plan. The raw material may be supplied from common stock. If the will to co-operative effort is created, there is surely ample opportunity for co-operation, division of labour, saving of time, and efficiency of work. All these things are today being done by the All India Spinners' Association in over 5,000 villages.

But *khadi* is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support *khadi* in return for the heat and the sustenance they derive from it. Without it, the other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of the other industries, *khadi* could not make further progress. For villagers to be able to occupy their spare time profitably, the village life must be touched at all points. That is what the two Associations are expected to do.

Naturally they can have nothing to do with politics or political parties. The Congress, in my opinion, did well in making both the Associations autonomous and wholly non-political. All parties and all communities can combine to uplift the villages economically, morally and hygienically.

I know that there is a school of thought that does not regard *khadi* as an economic proposition at all. I hope that they will not be scared by my having mentioned *khadi* as the centre of village activities. I could not complete the

picture of my mind without showing the inter-relation between *khadi* and the other village industries. Those who do not see it are welcome only to concentrate their effort on the other industries. But this, too, they will be able to do through the new Association, if they appreciate the background I have endeavoured to give in this article.

Harijan, 16-11-1934

8

A. I. V. I. A. — ITS MEANING AND SCOPE

[The last was the busiest week that Gandhiji had since the Congress. His mind is wholly occupied with the thought of the Village Industries Association, and his post on the subject is already more than he can cope with. But the last week was made even fuller because of the annual session of the Gandhi Seva Sangh. The Sangh contains some of the picked workers in the country who are giving all their time to constructive work, and the third talk that Gandhiji gave them during the week was on the meaning and scope of the new Association. Here is brief resume. M. D.]

Some of you here perhaps know how the Village Industries Association came into being. During my extensive Harijan tour last year it was clearly borne in upon me that the way in which we were carrying on our *khadi* work was hardly enough either to universalize *khadi* or to rejuvenate the villages. I saw that it was confined to a very few and that even those who used *khadi* exclusively were under the impression that they need do nothing else and that they might use other things irrespective of how and where they were made. *Khadi* was thus becoming a lifeless symbol, and I saw that, if the state of things were allowed to go on, *khadi* might even die of sheer inanition. It is not that a concentrated, intensive effort devoted exclusively to *khadi* would not be conducive to success, but there was neither that concentration nor intensity. All did not give ALL their spare time to the *charkha* or the *takli*, and all had not taken to the exclusive use of *khadi* — though their

number was larger than that of the spinners. But the rest were all idle. There were multitudes of men with quantities of enforced leisure on their hands. That I saw was a state which could lead only to our undoing. 'These people,' I said to myself, 'could never win Swaraj. For, their involuntary and voluntary idleness made them a perpetual prey of exploiters, foreign and indigenous. Whether the exploiter was from outside or from the Indian cities, their state would be the same, they would have no Swaraj.' So I said to myself, 'Let these people be asked to do something else; if they will not interest themselves in *khadi*, let them take up some work which used to be done by their ancestors, but which has of late died out.' There were numerous things of daily use which they used to produce themselves not many years ago, but for which they now depend on the outer world. There were numerous things of daily use to the town-dweller for which he depended on the villagers, but which he now imports from cities. The moment the villagers decided to devote all their spare time to doing something useful and town-dwellers to use those village products, the snapped link between the villagers and the town-dwellers would be restored. As to which of the extinct or moribund village industries and crafts could be revived, we could not be sure until we sat down in the midst of the villages to investigate, to tabulate and classify. But I picked up two things of the most vital importance: articles of diet and articles of dress. *Khadi* was there. In the matter of articles of diet, we were fast losing our self-sufficiency. Only a few years ago, we pounded our own paddy and ground our own flour. Put aside for the time being the question of health. It is an indisputable fact that the flour mill and the rice mill have driven millions of women out of employment and deprived them of the means of eking out their income. Sugar is fast taking the place of jaggery, and ready-made articles of diet like biscuits and sweetmeats are freely being imported into our villages. This means that all the village industries are gradually slipping out of the hands of the villager, who has become a producer of raw materials for

the exploiter. He continually gives, and gets little in return. Even the little he gets for the raw material he produces he gives back to the sugar merchant and the cloth merchant. His mind and body have become very much like those of the animals, his constant companions. When we come to think of it, we find that the villager of today is not even half so intelligent or resourceful as the villager of fifty years ago. For, whereas the former is reduced to a state of miserable dependence and idleness, the latter used his mind and body for all he needed and produced them at home. Even the village artisan today partakes of the resourcelessness that has overtaken the rest of the village. Go to the village carpenter and ask him to make a spinning wheel for you, go to the village smith and ask him to make a spindle for you, you will be disappointed. This is a deplorable state of things. It is as a remedy for it that the Village Industries Association has been conceived.

This cry of 'back to the village', some critics say, is putting back the hands of the clock of progress. But is it really so? Is it going back to the village, or rendering back to it what belongs to it? I am not asking the city-dwellers to go to and live in the villages. But I am asking them to render unto the villagers what is due to them. Is there any single raw material that the city-dwellers can obtain except from the villager? If they cannot, why not teach him to work on it himself, as he used to before and as he would do now but for our exploiting inroads?

But this reinstating the villager in what was once his natural position is no easy task, I had thought that I should be able to frame a constitution and set the Association going with the help of Shri Kumarappa within a short time. But the more I dive into it, the more I find myself out of my depth. In a sense, the work is much more difficult than *khadi* which does not in any way offer a complicated problem. You have simply to exclude all foreign and machine-made cloth, and you have established *khadi* on a secure foundation. But here the field is so vast, there is such an infinite variety of industries to handle and organize, that it will tax all our business talent, expert knowledge

and scientific training. It cannot be achieved without hard toil, incessant endeavour and application of all our business and scientific abilities to this supreme purpose. Thus, I sent a questionnaire to several of our well-known doctors and chemists, asking them to enlighten me on the chemical analysis and different food values of polished and unpolished rice, jaggery and sugar, and so on. Many friends, I am thankful to say, have immediately responded, but only to confess that there has been no research in some of the directions I had inquired about. Is it not a tragedy that no scientist should be able to give me the chemical analysis of such a simple article as *gud*? The reason is that we have not thought of the villager. Take the case of honey. I am told that in foreign countries such a careful analysis of honey is made that no sample which fails to satisfy a particular test is bottled for the market. In India we have got vast resources for the production of the finest honey, but we have not much expert knowledge in the matter. An esteemed doctor friend writes to say that in his hospital, at any rate, polished rice is taboo and that it has been proved after experiments on rats and other animals that polished rice is harmful. But why have not all the medical men published the results of their investigation and experiment and joined in declaring the use of such rice as positively harmful?

I have just by one or two instances indicated my difficulty. What sort of an organization should we have? What kind of laboratory research shall we have to go in for? We shall need a number of scientists and chemists prepared to lay not only their expert knowledge at our disposal, but to sit down in our laboratories and to devote hours of time, free of charge, to experiments in the direction I have indicated. We shall have not only to publish the results from time to time but we shall have to inspect and certify various products. Also we shall have to find out whether the villager who produces an article or foodstuff rests content with exporting it and with using a cheap substitute imported from outside. We shall have to see that the villagers become first of all self-contained and

I would most assuredly destroy or radically change much that goes under the name of modern civilization. But that is an old story of life. The attempt is undoubtedly there. Its success depends upon God. But the attempt to revive and encourage the remunerative village industries is not part of such an attempt, except in so far as every one of my activities, including the propagation of non-violence, can be described as such an attempt. The revival of village industries is but an extension of the *khadi* effort. Hand-spun cloth, hand-made paper, hand-pounded rice, home-made bread and jam, are not uncommon in the West. Only there they do not have one-hundredth of the importance they have in India. For, with us, their revival means life, their destruction means death, to the villagers, as he who runs may see. Whatever the machine age may do, it will never give employment to the millions whom the wholesale introduction of power machinery must displace.

Harjan. 4-1-1935

10

HOW TO BEGIN

I

Correspondents have been writing, and friends have been seeing me, to ask me how to begin the village industries work and what to do first.

The obvious answer is: Begin with yourself and do first that which is easiest for you to do.

This answer, however, does not satisfy the enquirers. Let me, therefore, be more explicit.

Each person can examine all the articles of food, clothing and other things that he uses from day to day, and replace foreign makes or city makes by those produced by the villagers in their homes or fields with the simple inexpensive tools they can easily handle and mend. This replacement will be itself an education of great value and a solid beginning. The next step will be opened out to him of itself. For instance, say, the beginner has been hitherto

using a tooth-brush made in a Bombay factory. He wants to replace it with a village brush. He is advised to use a *babul* twig. If he has weak teeth or is toothless, he has to crush one end of it with a rounded stone or a hammer on a hard surface. The other end he slits with a knife and uses the halves as tongue-scrapers. He will find these brushes to be cheaper and much cleaner than the very unhygienic factory-made tooth-brush. The city-made tooth-powder he naturally replaces with equal parts of clean, finely ground wood-charcoal and clean salt. He will replace mill cloth with village-spun *khadi*, and mill-husked rice with hand-husked, unpolished rice, and white sugar with village-made *gud*. These I have taken merely as samples already mentioned in these columns. I have mentioned them again to deal with the difficulties that have been mentioned by those who have been discussing the question with me. Some say with reference to rice, for instance, 'Hand-husked rice is much dearer than mill-husked rice.' Others say, 'The art of hand-husking is forgotten, and there are no huskers to be found.' Yet others say, 'We never get mill-husked rice in our parts. We can supply hand-husked rice at 19 seers to the rupee.' All these are right and all are wrong. They are right so far as their own experience in their own district is concerned. All are wrong because the real truth is unknown to them. I am daily gathering startling experiences. All this comes from beginning with oneself. The following is the result of my observations to date.

Whole, unpolished rice is unprocurable in the bazaars. It is beautiful to look at, and rich and sweet to the taste. Mills can never compete with this unpolished rice. It is husked in a simple manner. Most of the paddy can be husked in a light *chakki* without difficulty. There are some varieties the husk of which is not separated by grinding. The best way of treating such paddy is to boil it first and then separate the chaff from the grain. This rice, it is said, is most nutritious and, naturally, the cheapest. In the villages, if they husk their own paddy, it must always be cheaper for the peasant than the corresponding mill-husked rice,

whether polished or unpolished. The majority of rice found ordinarily in the bazaars is always more or less polished, whether hand-husked or mill-husked. Wholly unpolished rice is always hand-husked and is every time cheaper than the mill-husked rice, the variety being the same.

Subject to further research, the observations so far show that it is because of our criminal negligence that rice-eating millions eat deteriorated rice and pay a heavy price into the bargain. Let the village worker test the truth of these observations for himself. It won't be a bad beginning.

Next week I must take up *gud* and other articles of diet and another part of village work.

Harijan, 25-1-1935

II

Last week I dealt with rice. Let us now take up wheat. It is the second most important article of diet, if not the first. From the nutritive standpoint, it is the king of cereals. By itself, it is more perfect than rice. Flour bereft of the valuable bran is like polished rice. That branless flour is as bad as polished rice is the universal testimony of medical men. Whole-wheat flour ground in one's own *chakki* is any day superior to, and cheaper than, the fine flour to be had in the bazaars. It is cheaper because the cost of grinding is saved. Again, in whole-wheat flour there is no loss of weight. In fine flour there is loss of weight. The richest part of wheat is contained in its bran. There is a terrible loss of nutrition when the bran of wheat is removed. The villagers and others who eat whole-wheat flour ground in their own *chakkis* save their money and what is more important, their health. A large part of the millions that flour mills make will remain in and circulate among the deserving poor when village grinding is revived.

But the objection is taken that *chakki* grinding is a tedious process, that often wheat is indifferently ground, and that it does not pay the villagers to grind wheat themselves. If it paid the villagers formerly to grind their

own corn, surely the advent of flour mills should make no difference. They may not plead want of time; and when intelligence is allied to labour there is every hope of improvement in the *chakki*. The argument of indifferent grinding can have no practical value. If the *chakki* was such an indifferent grinder, it could not have stood the test of time immemorial. But to obviate the risk of using indifferently ground whole-wheat flour, I suggest that, wherever there is suspicion, the flours of uneven grinding may be passed through a sieve and the contents may be turned into thick porridge and eaten with or after *chapati*. If this plan is followed, grinding becomes incredibly simple, and much time and labour can be saved.

All this change can only be brought about by some previous preparation on the part of workers and instruction of villagers. This is a thankless task. But it is worth doing, if the villagers are to live in health and elementary comfort.

Gud is the next article that demands attention. According to the medical testimony I have reproduced in these columns, *gud* is any day superior to refined sugar in food value, and if the villagers cease to make *gud* as they are already beginning to do, they will be deprived of important food adjunct for their children. They may do without *gud* themselves, but their children cannot without undermining their stamina. *Gud* is superior to bazaar sweets and to refined sugar. Retention of *gud* and its use by the people in general means several crores of rupees retained by the villagers.

But some workers maintain that *gud* does not pay the cost of production. The growers who need money against their crops cannot afford to wait till they have turned cane-juice into *gud* and disposed of it. Though I have testimony to the contrary too, this argument is not without force. I have no ready-made answer for it. There must be something radically wrong when an article of use, made in the place where also its raw material is grown, does not pay the cost of labour. This is a subject that demands local investigation in each case. Workers must not take the answer of villagers and despair of a remedy. National

growth, identification of cities with villages, depend upon the solution of such knotty problems as are presented by *gud*. We must make up our mind that *gud* must not disappear from the villages, even if it means an additional pice to be paid for it by city people.

Harijan, 1-2-1935

III

I have dealt with some chief articles of food, and shown what they mean to the villagers in health and wealth. There is, however, the equally important subject of sanitation and hygiene. Proper attention to these means increase in health, energy and wealth, directly and indirectly.

Some foreign observers have testified that, of all the nations of the earth, India comes, perhaps, to the top in the observance of personal cleanliness. But I fear that it is not possible to say the same of corporate, in other words village, cleanliness. In yet other words, we have not made much advance beyond the family interest. We would sacrifice everything for the family as distinguished from the village, i. e. in a sense, the nation.

Members of a family will keep their own home clean, but they will not be interested in the neighbour's. They will keep their courtyard clean of dirt, insects and reptiles, but will not hesitate to shove all into the neighbour's yard. As a result of this want of corporate responsibility, our villages are dung heaps. Though we are an unshod nation, we so dirty our streets and roads that for a sensitive person it is painful to walk along them barefoot. It is difficult to get clean, drinkable water in village wells, tanks and streams. The approaches to an ordinary village are heaped with muck and rubbish.

Village sanitation is, perhaps, the most difficult task before the All India Village Industries Association. No government can change the habits of a people without their hearty co-operation. And if the latter is forthcoming, a government will have little to do in the matter.

The intelligentsia — medical men and students — can deal with the problem successfully, if they would conscientiously, intelligently, zealously and regularly DO THE WORK

in the villages. Attention to personal and corporate hygiene is the beginning of all education.

The things to attend to in the villages are cleaning tanks and wells and keeping them clean, getting rid of dung heaps. If the workers will begin the work themselves, working like paid *bhangis* from day to day and always letting the villagers know that they are expected to join them so as ultimately to do the whole work themselves, they may be sure that they will find that the villagers will sooner or later co-operate. At least such is my experience of South Africa and Champaran, and even during the quick walking tour in Orissa last year.

Lanes and streets have to be cleansed of all the rubbish, which should be classified. There are portions which can be turned into manure, portions which have simply to be buried, and portions which can be directly turned into wealth. Every bone picked up is valuable raw material from which useful articles can be made or which can be crushed into rich manure. Rags and waste paper can be turned into paper, and excreta picked up are golden manure for the village fields. The way to treat the excreta is to mix them, liquid as well as solid, with superficial earth in soil dug no deeper than one foot at the most. In his book on Rural Hygiene, Dr. Poore says that excreta should be buried in earth no deeper than nine to twelve inches. (I am quoting from memory.) The author contends that the superficial earth is charged with minute life, which, together with light and air which easily penetrate it, turn the excreta into good soft sweet-smelling soil within a week. Any villager can test this for himself. The way to do it is either to have fixed latrines with earthen or iron buckets, and empty the contents in properly prepared places from day to day, or to perform the functions directly on the ground dug up in squares. The excreta can either be buried in a village common or in individual fields. This can only be done by the co-operation of villagers. At the worst, an enterprising villager can collect the excreta and turn them into wealth for himself. At present, this rich manure,

valued at lakhs of rupees, runs to waste every day, fouls the air and brings disease into the bargain.

Village tanks are promiscuously used for bathing, washing clothes, and drinking and cooking purposes. Many village tanks are also used by cattle. Buffaloes are often to be seen wallowing in them. The wonder is that, in spite of this sinful misuse of village tanks villages have not been destroyed by epidemics. It is the universal medical evidence that this neglect to ensure purity of the water supply of villages is responsible for many of the diseases suffered by the villagers.

This, it will be admitted, is a gloriously interesting and instructive service, fraught with incalculable benefit to the suffering humanity of India. I hope it is clear from my description of the way in which the problem should be tackled, that, given willing workers who will wield the broom and the shovel with the same ease and pride as the pen and the pencil, the question of expense is almost wholly eliminated. All the outlay that will be required is confined to a broom, a basket, a shovel and a pickaxe, and possibly some disinfectant. Dry ashes are, perhaps, as effective a disinfectant as any that a chemist can supply. But here let philanthropic chemists tell us what is the most effective and cheap village disinfectant that villagers can improvise in their villages.

Harijan, 3-2-1935

11

VILLAGE TANNING & ITS POSSIBILITIES

Village tanning is as ancient as India itself. No one can say when tanning became a degraded calling. It could not have been so in ancient times. But we know today that one of the most useful and indispensable industries has consigned probably a million people to hereditary untouchability. An evil day dawned upon this unhappy country when labour began to be despised and therefore neglected. Millions of those who were the salt of the earth,

on whose industry this country depended for its very existence, came to be regarded as low classes, and microscopic leisured few became the privileged classes, with the tragic result that India suffered morally and materially. Which was the greater of the two losses it is difficult, if not impossible, to estimate. But the criminal neglect of the peasants and the artisans has reduced us to pauperism, dulness and habitual idleness. With her magnificent climate, lofty mountains, mighty rivers and an extensive seaboard, India has limitless resources, whose full exploitation in her villages should have prevented poverty and disease. But divorce of the intellect from body-labour has made of us perhaps the shortest-lived, most resourceless and most exploited nation on earth. The state of village tanning is, perhaps, the best proof of my indictment. It was the late Madhusudan Das who opened my eyes to the great crime against a part of humanity. He sought to make reparation by opening what might be called an educational tannery. His enterprise did not come up to his expectations, but he was responsible for the livelihood of hundreds of shoemakers in Cuttack.

It is estimated that rupees nine crores worth of raw hide is annually exported from India and that much of it is returned to her in the shape of manufactured articles. This means not only a material, but also an intellectual, drain. We miss the training we should receive in tanning and preparing the innumerable articles of leather we need for daily use.

Tanning requires great technical skill. An army of chemists can find scope for their inventive talent in this great industry. There are two ways of developing it. One is the uplift of Harijans living in the villages and eking out a bare subsistence, living in filth and degradation and consigned to the village ghetto, isolated and away from the village proper. This way means part reorganization of villages and taking art, education, cleanliness, prosperity and dignity to them. This means also the application of chemical talent to village uplift. Tanning chemists have to discover improved methods of tanning. The village chemist has to stoop to conquer. He has to learn and understand

the crude village tanning, which is still in existence but which is fast dying owing to neglect, not to say want of support. But the crude method may not be summarily scrapped, at least not before a sympathetic examination. It has served well for centuries. It could not have done so, if it had no merit. The only research I know in this direction is being carried on in Shantiniketan, and then it was started at the now defunct Ashram at Sabarmati. I have not been able to keep myself in touch with the progress of the experiment at Shantiniketan. There is every prospect of its revival at the Harijan Ashram, which the Sabarmati Ashram has now become. These experiments are mere drops in the ocean of possible research.

Cow-preservation is an article of faith in Hinduism. No Harijan worth his salt will kill cattle for food. But, having become untouchable, he has learnt the evil habit of eating carrion. He will not kill a cow but will eat with the greatest relish the flesh of a dead cow. It may be physiologically harmless. But psychologically there is nothing, perhaps, so repulsive as carrion-eating. And yet, when a dead cow is brought to a Harijan tanner's house, it is a day of rejoicing for the whole household. Children dance round the carcass, and as the animal is flayed, they take hold of bones or pieces of flesh and throw them at one another. As a tanner, who is living at the Harijan Ashram, describing the scenes at his own now forsaken home, tells me the whole family is drunk with joy at the sight of the dead animal. I know how hard I have found it working among Harijans to wean them from the soul-destroying habit of eating carrion. Reformed tanning means the automatic disappearance of carrion-eating.

Well, here is the use for high intelligence and the art of dissection. Here is also a mighty step in the direction of cow-preservation. The cow must die at the hands of the butcher, unless we learn the art of increasing her capacity of milk-giving, unless we improve her stock and make her male progeny more useful for the field and carrying burdens, unless we make scientific use of all her excreta as manure, and unless, when she and hers die, we are

prepared to make the wisest use of her hide, bone, flesh, entrails, etc.

I am just now concerned only with the carcass. It is well to remember here that the village tanner, thank God, has to deal only with the carcass, not the slaughtered animal. He has no means of bringing the dead animal in a decent way. He lifts it, drags it, and this injures the skin and reduces the value of the hide. If the villagers and the public knew the priceless and noble service the tanner renders, they will provide easy and simple methods of carrying it, so as not to injure the skin at all.

The next process is flaying the animal. This requires great skill. I am told that none, not even surgeons, do this work better or more expeditiously than the village tanner does with his village knife. I have inquired of those who should know. They have not been able to show me an improvement upon the village tanner. This is not to say that there is none better. I merely give the reader the benefit of my own very limited experience. The village tanner has no use for the bone. He throws it away. Dogs hover round the carcass whilst it is flayed, and take away some, if not all, of the bones. This is a dead loss to the country. The bones, if powdered fine, apart from their other uses, make valuable manure. What remains after the dogs have taken away their share is transported to foreign countries and returns to us in the shape of handles, buttons, etc.

The second way is urbanizing this great industry. There are several tanneries in India doing this work. Their examination is outside the scope of this article. This urbanization can do little good to the Harijans, much less to the villages. It is a process of double drain from the villages. Urbanization in India is slow but sure death for her villages and villagers. Urbanization can never support ninety per cent of India's population, which is living in her 700,000 villages. To remove from these villages tanning and such other industries is to remove what little opportunity there still is for making skilled use of the hand and the head. And when the village handicrafts disappear, the villagers working only with their cattle on the field, with idleness for six or four

months in the year, must, in the words of Madhusudan Das, be reduced to the level of the beast and be without proper nourishment, either of the mind or the body, and, therefore, without joy and without hope.

Here is work for the cent per cent Swadeshi lover and scope for the harnessing of technical skill to the solution of a great problem. The work fells three apples with one throw. It serves the Harijans, it serves the villagers, and it means honourable employment for the middle class intelligentsia who are in search of employment. Add to this the fact that intelligentsia have a proper opportunity of coming in direct touch with the villagers.

Harijan, 7-9-1934

12

" WHY NOT LABOUR-SAVING DEVICES ? "

A fair friend who was enthused over the contemplated formation of the All India Village Industries Association, on reading my Pres^c message on preliminary programme writes :

" The very idea of the revival or encouragement of the hand-husking of rice and *chakki*-grinding even for villages has scared me from, and abated my enthusiasm for, village work. It seems to me an enormous waste of one's time and energy not to take advantage of labour-saving devices in the uplift scheme. If the villagers, and along with them the uplift workers, have to husk and grind, there will hardly be leisure left for them to attend to anything else for their improvement. Besides, if the primitive method were revived, the men will take up the work in the first flush of enthusiasm ; but ultimately the brunt of the whole work, I mean husking and grinding, will fall on us, women, and there will be setback to the little progress we have already made. "

Underlying this argument is a fallacy. There is no question of refusing to take advantage of labour-saving devices. If the villagers had enough to eat and to clothe

themselves with, there would be no cause for home-grinding or home-husking, assuring that the question of health was not of any importance or, if it was, there was no difference between home-ground flour and mill-ground, or home-husked rice and mill-husked. But the problem is that the villagers became idle when they left off husking and grinding even for their own use, and made no good use of their idle hours, whether for uplift or otherwise. A starving man or woman who has time on his or her hand will surely be glad to earn an honest anna during that time, for he or she will resent being advised to save his or her labour when either can turn it into a few pice to alleviate starvation. My correspondent is wrong in thinking that the uplift worker has either to grind or husk. He has certainly to learn the art and know the tools, so that he can suggest improvements and understand the limitations of the tools. She is wrong, again, in thinking that in the first flush of enthusiasm men will be called upon to grind or husk or will perform these tasks of their own accord and ultimately let the brunt fall on the shoulders of women. The fact is that husking and grinding was the prerogative of women, and tens of thousands made a living out of this task, which was both dignified and invigorative. Now they are perforce idle, because the vast majority of them have not been able to find another employment in the place of these two which we have snatched away from them.

When the fair friend writes about the " little progress " that the women have already made, she has undoubtedly the city-dwellers in mind, for the village life is entirely untouched by uplift workers. The majority of them do not even know how the women or men live in the 700,000 villages of this vast land. We little know that they have deteriorated for want of nourishing food and protective clothing. And we little know how, being fed on innutritious rice or flour, which are their staple, they and their children lose stamina and what little vitality they have.

I have no partiality for return to the primitive method of grinding and husking for the sake of them. I suggest the return, because there is no other way of giving employment

to the millions of villagers who are living in idleness. In my opinion, village uplift is impossible, unless we solve the pressing economic distress. Therefore, to induce the villagers to utilize their idle hours is in itself solid uplift work. I invite the fair correspondent and those who feel like her to go to some villages, live there for some time in the midst of the villagers and try to live like them, and they will soon perceive the soundness of my argument.

Harijan 30-11 1934

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A I V I A -- WHAT IT IS

[The following questions put on 28.1.35 by a U P interviewer and Gandhiji's answers to them are reproduced from the daily Press. They were revised by Gandhiji before publication. M D]

Question When do you think you will be able to give an actual start to the work of the Village Industries Association?

Gandhiji It is difficult to say what is meant by "start". But if by it is meant actual work through different agencies in villages, I am unable to fix the exact date, because we are moving very cautiously—cautiously in the sense that we do not want to make any mistakes so long as it is possible to avoid them—because of the varied nature of the work to be done. This work is like sailing on an uncharted sea. The Central Board is meeting in Wardha on the 1st of the next month, when perhaps a definite step will be taken. Meanwhile, not a moment has been lost. We have been collecting valuable information, and we are having promises of support from many quarters.

Q Do you intend to start branches of the Association in all the provinces simultaneously, or do you intend to make a beginning in a few selected places? Which will be the headquarters of the Association? Will a branch be established here before you leave?

G. We aim at having no branches, but agencies all over India, the ideal being to have as many agents as there are villages, so as to ensure perfect distribution of work. The secret of success of the effort lies in decentralization. I do not know if an agency will be formally established in Delhi before I leave. But I am collecting all the information that is available. The final appointment will be made by the Central Board. The headquarters are in Wardha, where Seth Jamnalalji has given a valuable garden with a large bungalow in it, and he has promised more land, if it is required for subsequent arrangements.

Q. Is the Association likely to depend on its unaided strength for all information, statistical or otherwise, in respect of the dead or dying industries you seek to revive, or will it invite the co-operation of all official and non-official agencies operating in India at present?

G. The Association will do nothing unaided, so vast is the work to be done. Therefore it will invite and receive co-operation of all agencies, not excluding the official agencies.

Q. Will the Association seek to revive only those industries whose revival is not reasonably calculated to come in conflict with the various world economic and commercial forces now acting and reacting on India; or will the Association try to revive the dead industries, irrespective of such considerations and merely because in their ancient flourishing condition they used to give food to millions of villages?

G. The Association will certainly seek to revive and encourage as many industries as are necessary for the moral and material growth of village life. It will not be deterred by the so-called conflicting world forces.

Q. It is generally agreed that the cotton mills of India have not taken very kindly to the *khadi* industry. If the Association attempts to resuscitate those dead, dying or unorganized industries which are likely to clash with the interests of more organized, indigenous industries, is it not your apprehension that the Association will meet with opposition?

G. It is likely that the Association will meet with opposition from mechanized industries, such as sugar mills, rice mills and flour mills. It is for us to find a way out of the difficulty. I have every hope that we shall be able to overcome these difficulties.

Q. Take, for instance, the question of sugar v. *gud*. Sugar is a protected industry and is now fairly well-organized. It was stated in the Press some time ago that the Association would try to increase the consumption of *gud*. If it is true, do you not think that by doing so it will evoke the opposition of the sugar industry?

G. That may be so. If the consumption of *gud* increases and the consumption of sugar decreases, it would be a blessing for India, because medical testimony goes to show that *gud* is superior to sugar in nutritive value; and it is the business of the Association, as also of the public, to see to it that no mechanized industry is allowed to interfere with the health of the people.

Q. May I have your views on whether or not the Association should supplement the existing large-scale industries, without antagonizing them?

G. The answer to it has already been given.

Q. Am I wrong in suggesting that, from the resuscitation of dead village industries, such as you contemplate, to the industrialization of India on human, rational and intelligent lines (as opposed to greedy capitalism), it is but a step?

G. I do not know if a vast country like India, with her millions of people having four months of enforced idleness on their hand, can afford to have large-scale industries and yet live a life of tolerable comfort. Large-scale, centralized industries in India, except such industries as cannot possibly be carried on in villages, must mean starvation of millions, unless honourable employment is found for the displaced millions.

Q. If what the Press says about the Government circular forestalling the activities of the Village Industries Association is true, do you think there is any chance of the Association coming in conflict with the Government?

G. There is no possibility of the Association coming in conflict with Government, because the ideal that the Association has set before it appears to me to be different from that of the Government effort, if I have understood it rightly, except, perhaps, in the matter of sanitation. We should certainly not take up the work of sanitation in village where the Government agencies might be doing it. There is no idea whatsoever to supplant the Government agency. It may be to supplement the work.

Q. You must have noticed that the Government suspect that through this Association you will have greater opportunities of coming in closer contact with the villages, which you will utilize to prepare for organizing civil disobedience again in a far more gigantic scale.

G. It never crossed my mind. I have never worked in that indirect fashion. It would defeat the very end that I have in view. I want the material and moral growth of the villages for itself; and if it is achieved, it would be a full satisfaction of my ambition. Similarly, if ever I should have to organize civil disobedience, it would be organized independently of any other activity. If full effect is given to the word "civil", all this suspicion should be dispelled. But I have patience enough, and I am convinced that, if what I have said is true, all the suspicion will be dispelled without any further effort on my part.

Q. I would ask another question. You said that you could show a miracle, if Government understood the spirit of your village industries scheme and lent its help to you. What do you mean by help? Is it financial assistance?

G. I simply say that, if Government understand the secret of my methods and give me complete co-operation in the work I am doing, I undertake to show miracles. I do not want financial co-operation. I want moral, enthusiastic endorsement from Government.

NO DISAPPOINTMENT

Shri Hardayal Nag, probably the oldest leader at work in all India, writes :

I feel disappointed to notice want of sufficient rally round you in the work of your All-India Village Industries Association. If you charge me with neglect of duty in this connection, I have no other alternative than to plead guilty. I have been studying the economic aspect of the problem of village industries since the beginning of my public life. Your programme does not enthuse me much simply because I miss in it that economic aspect. It may be my fault, and I am badly in need of being enlightened.

The wolf of the foreign trade that devoured all the village industries throughout the length and breadth of India is still there. The siren of economic jugglery is still singing the slogan 'buy at the cheapest market' with remarkable effect. Imagine for a while that India is flooded with cottage-made goods: but manufacture of goods without consumers or purchasers is nothing but a loss. The handloom can produce khaddar, but it cannot produce its buyer. My painful experience is that many of those who spin do not wear any cloth made out of their self-spun yarn. Most of the spinners do not even wear khaddar. Sale of yarn brings them almost nothing. Some do not even condescend to sell or donate their yarn. Such amateurs cannot continue to spin for long. Now, if the cottagers of all Indian villages produce goods by handicraft, not for their own use but for sale, wherefrom are their purchasers to come? No foreign country will buy them so long as India's political slavery lasts. The Indian consumers eschew Indian cottage-made rough goods, if they eschew anything at all. The *gud* producer may taste a bit of it for the sake of lip loyalty to the country, but will he mix it with his tea or milk? Will the owner of a village shoe factory use rough shoes of his own factory in preference to fine pleasurable cheap imported shoes? I have had the misfortune to witness failures of many small producing concerns in which goods

were manufactured in terms of money and only for sale. Their only object was money-making, and failure was inevitable. The Indian cottagers will never eschew foreign goods unless and until they are taught to learn that no foreign goods can be cheaper than the goods which they can produce with their own raw materials and spare labour and for their own use. They have to borrow money for purchasing imported goods, but they need not borrow at all in producing their necessities of life. So far as cottagers are concerned co-operative barter system is much preferable to the present money system. The Indian villagers are so demoralized by the wolf of foreign trade that they cannot even think except in terms of money."

Hardayal Babu has earned his rest, and no one will complain if he retires from all public work. But like his three competitors, Pandit Malaviyaji, Abbas Tyabji* and Vijayaraghavachariar, he insists on working. He can, therefore, expect no indulgence from critics on the ground of age. I know he wants none. His body and his intellect remain unimpaired and are ever at the disposal of the nation.

Let me then tell him that those who are actually working have no sense of disappointment. The ground is so new that it takes long to prepare. The workers are not able to cope with what they have on their hands.

I suggest then that Hardayal Babu has the sense of disappointment for the very reason he has given. He pleads guilty to the charge of neglect of duty. If he had, as is his wont, taken up the work, he would no doubt have found it very difficult, but he would certainly not have been disappointed. He misses the economic aspect because he has not worked to see it.

Having been immersed in Harijan work, I discovered that if India was not to perish, we had to begin with the lowest rung of the ladder. If that was rotten, all work done at the top or at the intermediate rungs was bound ultimately to fail.

There is more than the economic aspect in the programme before the country. To provide nourishing food for the nation

* Since deceased.

in the manner sketched in the programme is to give it both money and health. For the villagers to pound their own rice and eat it unpolished whole, means saving at least thirty crores of rupees per year and promoting health. But the tragedy of it is that we have no such thing as unpolished whole rice to be had in the ordinary bazaar. And the Association has to wait some days before it can give a clear lead to the nation. The nation requires education as to the food to be taken and the manner in which it has to be prepared.

This is no programme of preparing shoddy goods in the villages and forcing them on unwilling buyers. There is to be no competition, foredoomed to failure, with foreign or Swadeshi corresponding articles. The villagers are to be their own buyers. They will primarily consume what they produce. For they are ninety per cent of the population. They will manufacture for the cities what the latter want and what they can usefully manufacture. Most undoubtedly people will be advised to use *gud* for their milk and tea. They will be told, as they are being told, that it is a superstition to think that *gud* taken in milk or tea is injurious to health. One correspondent says that on his wife beginning to take *gud* with her tea instead of sugar she lost her constipation. I am not surprised, because *gud* has a mild laxative effect which sugar certainly has not. The middle class people have exploited the villages. Some of them are now making reparation by making them realize their dignity and importance in the national evolution.

Then take the question of sanitation. Proper attention to it gives the country two rupees per year per head. That means sixty crores of rupees per annum in addition to better health and greater efficiency. The present programme is the foundation of an allround improvement in the tottering condition of the seven lakhs of India's villages. It is work that is long overdue. It has to be done, no matter what India's political condition is. It includes every class of villagers, from the scavenger to the sowcar. It is work in which all parties can whole-heartedly join. Its future is assured, if a supply of workers can be assured.

FALLACIES

A careful observer of events and things writes :

"I have no doubt that there is an enormous scope for work in the directions indicated by you in your letter under reply. Cottage industries have a place. But, to be quite frank, I do not think that these can replace industries on a big scale. Leaving aside the financial interests of those controlling such industries, I think that it will not be in the interest of the country to work for the ruin of such industries, which have been established and which can be established in this country. The greatest objection to machinery that has been urged is the growing tendency to reduce the number of men employed. This results in unemployment. The present method of distribution of profits may require readjustment. But leisure, if it can be well utilized, is more important than many other things. Merely to keep a large number employed at work I do not think it is necessary to discard economic and efficient machinery. It should be able to give leisure and food to many, and in this 'many' I include people not even distantly connected with the industry. With such a large population as in India and steadily increasing, I fear that at no time will it be possible to keep everyone in reasonable comfort. With improved education and sanitation, life will be prolonged and death rate will come down. From the population point of view this will make the condition worse. So, you will forgive my saying that the first thing that requires to be done is to take measures to restrict population, and it cannot be done without birth control. I know that you are against it. But, now that you are applying your mind solely to the problem of economic reconstruction by improvement in sanitation, food values, cottage industries, etc., I request you to consider if this is not also one of the things that should receive your attention."

The writer is an honest thinker and yet, as it seems to me, has missed the whole aim of the work being done

by the two organizations he has in mind. Their aim is *not* to replace or to ruin the big industries, but it is to revive the dead or dying industries and therethrough to find employment for the millions who are semi-starved because they are forced to live in complete or semi-idleness. This is a constructive, not a destructive, programme. The big industries can never, they don't hope to, overtake the unemployed millions. Their aim is primarily to make money for the few owners, never the direct one of finding employment for the unemployed millions. The organizers of *khadi* and other village industries don't hope in the near future to affect the big industries. They may hope to bring a ray of light into the dark dungeons, miscalled cottages, of the villagers. My esteemed correspondent seems to give up his whole case when he says 'leisure, if it can be well utilized, is more important than many other things.' The activities which he disapproves of are intended to accomplish the very end he has in view. They are designed to *well utilize* the leisure hours of the idle millions.

In this there is *no* war against the misuse and abuse of machinery, i. e. its use to the detriment of the millions. Dead machinery must not be pitted against the millions of living machines represented by the villagers scattered in the seven hundred thousand villages of India. Machinery to be well used has to help and ease human effort. The present use of machinery tends more and more to concentrate wealth in the hands of a few in total disregard of millions of men and women whose bread is snatched by it out of their mouths. The movement represented by the A. I. S. A. and the A. I. V. I. A. has been conceived so as to minimize the evil wrought by that craze for amassing large fortunes through the use of dead tools in order to avoid having to deal with very sensitive human tools.

The writer fears that at no time will it be possible to keep everyone in reasonable comfort. This fear is not shared by those working in the villages. On the contrary closer contact with the villagers and closer knowledge of the villages fill them with the hope that if only the villagers can be induced to shed their traditional idleness

they can all live in reasonable comfort, without causing any very great dislocation. Certain oppressive conditions have no doubt to be abated. But the process will almost be unfelt, if there is some co-operation from what are termed vested interests.

The correspondent's fear about the securing of reasonable comfort for the existing population leads naturally to the fear of over-population. The resort to birth control becomes then the logical step. Birth control to me is a dismal abyss. It amounts to playing with unknown forces. Assuming that birth control by artificial aids is justifiable under certain conditions, it seems to be utterly impracticable of application among the millions. It seems to me to be easier to induce them to practise self-control than control by contraceptives. This little globe of ours is not a toy of yesterday. It has not suffered from the weight of over-population through its age of countless millions. How can it be that the truth has suddenly dawned upon some people that it is in danger of perishing of shortage of food unless birth rate is checked through the use of contraceptives? My fear is that my correspondent has led himself from one fallacy to another ending in the quagmire of contraceptives on a scale hitherto unknown.

Harijan, 14-9-1935

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A FATAL FALLACY

Among the questions that a correspondent asked me for discussion in *Harijan*, there was one which I have kept on my file for some time :

"Don't you think that it is impossible to achieve any great reform without winning political power? The present economic structure has also got to be tackled. No reconstruction is possible without a political reconstruction, and I am afraid all this talk of polished and unpolished rice, balanced diet and so on and so forth is mere moonshine."

I have often heard this argument advanced as an excuse for failure to do many things. I admit that there are certain things which cannot be done without political power, but there are numerous other things which do not at all depend upon political power. That is why a thinker like Thoreau said that "that Government is best which governs the least." This means that when people come into possession of political power, the interference with the freedom of people is reduced to a minimum. In other words, a nation that runs its affairs smoothly and effectively without much State interference is truly democratic. Where such a condition is absent, the form of Government is democratic only in name.

There is certainly no limit or restraint on the freedom of thought. It may be remembered that many reformers are nowadays laying the greatest emphasis on a new ideology. How few of us are going in for any reform in our opinions ! Modern scientists recognize the potency of thought, and that is why it is said that as a man thinks so does he become. One who always thinks of murder will turn a murderer, and one who thinks of incest will be incestuous. On the contrary he who always thinks of truth and non-violence will be truthful and non-violent, and he whose thoughts are fixed on God will be godly. In this realm of thought political power does not come into play at all. Even so it must be obvious that political power or want of it is of no consequence in many of our activities. I would make a humble suggestion to the correspondent. Let him make a detailed note of all his daily activities, and he is sure to find that many of them are performed independently of any political power. Man has to thank himself for his dependence. He can be independent as soon as he wills it.

The correspondent has raised the bugbear of 'great' reform and then fought shy of it. He who is not ready for small reforms will never be ready for great reforms. He who makes the best of his faculties will go on augmenting them, and he will find that what once seemed to him a great reform was really a small one. He who orders his

life in this way will lead a truly natural life. One must forget the political goal in order to realize it. To think in terms of the political goal in every matter and at every step is to raise unnecessary dust. Why worry one's head over a thing that is inevitable? Why die before one's death?

That is why I can take the keenest interest in discussing vitamins and leafy vegetables and unpolished rice. That is why it has become a matter of absorbing interest to me to find out how best to clean our latrines, how best to save our people from the heinous sin of fouling Mother Earth every morning. I do not quite see how thinking of these necessary problems and finding a solution for them has no political significance and how an examination of the financial policy of Government has necessarily a political bearing. What I am clear about is that the work I am doing and asking the masses to do is such as can be done by millions of people, whereas the work of examining the policy of our rulers will be beyond them. That it is a few people's business I will not dispute. Let those who are qualified to do so do it as best they can. But until these leaders can bring great changes into being, why should not millions like me use the gifts that God has given them to the best advantage? Why should they not make their bodies fitter instruments of service? Why should not they clear their own doors and environments of dirt and filth? Why should they be always in the grip of disease and incapable of helping themselves or anyone else?

No, I am afraid the correspondent's question betrays his laziness and despair and the depression that has overtaken many of us. I can confidently claim that I yield to none in my passion for freedom. No fatigue or depression has seized me. Many years' experience has convinced me that the activities that absorb my energies and attention are calculated to achieve the nation's freedom, that therein lies the secret of non-violent freedom. That is why I invite everyone, man and woman, young and old, to contribute his or her share to the great sacrifice.

BACK TO VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

It is said that through highly industrialized processes every American owns what is equivalent to 36 slaves. If we use America as our model, and if we allowed only 30 slaves to every Indian instead of 36, out of our 31 crores of human beings, 30 crores must perform hara-kari or be killed off. I know that some enthusiastic patriots will not only not mind such a process, but they will welcome it. They will say that it is better to have one crore of happy, contented, prosperous Indians, armed to the teeth, than to have 30 crores of unarmed creatures who can hardly walk. I have no answer to that philosophy, because, being saturated with the Harijan mentality, I can only think in terms of the millions of villagers and can only make my happiness dependent upon that of the poorest amongst them, and want to live only if they can live. My very simple mind cannot go beyond the little spindle of the little wheel which I can carry about with me from place to place and which I can manufacture without difficulty. In this connection a friend sends me the following paragraph which is going round the Press:

"To relieve unemployment in certain industries the Nazis have ordered the stoppage of the use of machines which were displacing human labour. Commenting on this interdiction *The Manchester Guardian* remarks: 'There has been a great deal of discussion about the effects of machinery in aggravating the unemployment crisis, but it has been left to the Nazis to do the logical thing and stop using it. It is only a little while since the world was asked to admire the miraculous triumph of labour-saving rationalization in Germany. Now the Government is bent on fighting the machine, either by prohibiting its use or by compelling employers to work shorter hours and employ more men. Mr. Gandhi's efforts to replace the spinning frame by the hand-wheel and the mechanical loom by the hand-loom are being paralleled closely in the German cigar and glass industries.'

The Guardian concludes its remarks by observing that, if Germany's 'ethics become mediaeval, there is no reason why her economics should not become mediaeval also.' Replying to these comments, a correspondent writes in the *Guardian*:

'Hitler, Gaudhi and others who in different ways are endeavouring to slow production to a point at which all goods are consumed may be reverting to mediaeval methods, but handicrafts are neither retrograde nor barbaric. They are taught in every progressive elementary and secondary school. . . Unless unemployment is abolished within a reasonable time, even by means that appear novel and unorthodox then the machinery age will disappear in revolutions and wars that will destroy us all. So long as machinery promotes the happiness and the prosperity of the masses as well as the classes it is a beneficent agent. But when it leads to the unemployment and starvation of millions, as is happening in the highly industrialized countries of the West, it becomes a curse. Machinery exists for man, and not vice versa, and must be made subservient to the well-being of the people and should not be allowed to become their master.'

That the village industries in Germany are being revived at the point of the sword is not relevant here. What is relevant is that a country, which has shown the highest technical skill and is amongst the most advanced in the matter of industrialization, is trying to go back to village industries for solving the problem of her terrible unemployment.

Harijan, 27-10-1933

A GREAT EXPERIMENT

The Ahmedabad Labour Union has of late started a great experiment which is likely to prove of great interest and importance to all labour organizations. The essence of the experiment consists in training its members to a supplementary occupation in addition to their principal occupation in the mills so that in the event of a lock-out, strike or loss of employment otherwise, they would always have something to fall back upon instead of being faced with the prospect of starvation. A mill-hand's life is ever full of vicissitudes. Thrift and economy no doubt provide a sort of remedy and it would be criminal to neglect them. But the savings thus made cannot carry one far, seeing that vast bulk of our mill labourers are always struggling on the margin of bare subsistence. Moreover it would never do for a working man during strike or unemployment to rest idly at home. There is nothing more injurious to his morale and self-respect than enforced idleness. The working class will never feel secure or develop a sense of self-assurance and strength unless its members are armed with an unfailing subsidiary means of subsistence to serve as a second string to their bow in a crisis.

The idea of a subsidiary occupation for the mill-hands was first conceived by me during the eventful twentythree days' strike of the Ahmedabad mill-hands in the year 1918. It occurred to me then that if the strike was to be successful the mill-hands must have an occupation that would maintain them wholly or partly. They must not rely upon doles. During the strike many of them were employed on unskilled labour. It was then that I mooted my suggestion to teach mill-hands a subsidiary occupation. But my suggestion remained a dead letter till the next strike came. A sort of a beginning was made then. But it was difficult to bring into being all of a sudden an effective organization for teaching subsidiary occupations. With the end of the second strike died also the effort to find and teach suitable occupations.

An organized and systematic effort is now being made by the Labour Union in that direction. Mill-hands are being taught to select occupations which they can practise in their leisure hours at home and which would give them substantial relief in times of unemployment. These are ginning, cleaning, carding and spinning of cotton, weaving, tailoring, soap and paper making, type-setting, etc.

I hold that a working knowledge of a variety of occupations is to the working class what metal is to the capitalist. A labourer's skill is his capital. Just as the capitalist cannot make his capital fructify without the co-operation of labour, even so the working man cannot make his labour fructify without the co-operation of capital. And if both labour and capital have the gift of intelligence equally developed in them and have confidence in their capacity to secure a fair deal, each at the hands of the other, they would get to respect and appreciate each other as equal partners in a common enterprise. They need not regard each other as inherently irreconcilable antagonists. But the difficulty is that whilst today capital is organized and seems to be securely entrenched, labour is not. The intelligence of the working man is cramped by his soulless, mechanical occupation which leaves him little scope or chance to develop his mind. It has prevented him from realizing the power and full dignity of his status. He has been taught to believe that his wages have to be dictated by capitalists instead of his demanding his own terms. Let him only be organized along right lines and have his intelligence quickened, let him learn a variety of occupations, and he will be able to go about with his head erect and never be afraid of being without means of sustenance.

It is the grossest of superstitions for the working man to believe that he is helpless before the employers. The effort of the Labour Union in Ahmedabad is to dispel this superstition in a concrete manner. Its experiment, therefore, ought to be welcomed by all concerned. Success will depend on an inflexible determination on the part of the Labour Union to follow up the good beginning that has been made, with unflagging perseverance. It must have the right sort of instructors who can arouse among the workers an

intelligent interest in their work. A handicraft plied merely mechanically can be as cramping to the mind and soul as any other pursuit taken up mechanically. An unintelligent effort is like a corpse from which the spirit has departed.

Harijan, 3-7-1937

19

A UNIQUE EXHIBITION

[In terms of the resolution passed at the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress the Reception Committee of the Lucknow Congress with the help of the Secretaries of the A. I. S. A and A. I. V. I. A., Shri Shankerlal Banker and Shri J. C. Kumarappa, organized an exhibition which was opened on the evening of the 28th March by Gandhiji. In its very constitution, therefore, it is a unique exhibition. I reserve a detailed description for the next issue giving here only a condensed summary of Gandhiji's speech. — M. D.]

I am glad and thankful to be able to come to Lucknow to open this *Khadi* and other Village Industries Exhibition. I may tell you that I was eager to be here at the opening. Though I know that Dr. Murarilal and Shri Shankerlal Banker have devoted themselves heart and soul to organizing it, at the back of it all was my conception. This exhibition, to my mind, brings out concretely for the first time, the conception of a true rural exhibition I have nursed in my breast for several years. In 1921 when we met in Ahmedabad in the first year of the new Congress Constitution, we took the first step towards rural-mindedness, and the exhibition organized under the auspices of the Congress held there was the beginning of the process which you find reaching its maturity today after 15 years. I have believed and repeated times without number that India is to be found not in its few cities but in its 700,000 villages. But we who have gathered here are not villagers, we are town-dwellers. We town-dwellers have believed that India is to be found in its towns and that the villages were created to minister to our needs. We have hardly ever paused

to inquire if those poor folks get sufficient to eat and clothe themselves with and whether they have a roof to shelter themselves from sun and rain. Now I do not think any Congress worker has travelled through the length and breadth of India as much as I have done during the past twenty years. That in itself is hardly a thing to be proud of. I, however, humbly claim, as a result of those peregrinations, to know the Indian villages more than any other Congress worker or leader. I have found that the town-dweller has generally exploited the villager, in fact he has lived on the poor villager's substance. Many a British official has written about the conditions of the people of India. No one has, to my knowledge, said that the Indian villager has enough to keep body and soul together. On the contrary they have admitted that the bulk of the population live on the verge of starvation and ten per cent are semi-starved, and that millions have to rest content with a pinch of dirty salt and chillies and polished rice or parched grain. You may be sure that if any of us were to be asked to live on that diet, we should not expect to survive it longer than a month or should be afraid of losing our mental faculties. And yet our villagers go through that state from day to day. The Village Industries Association was formed last year in order to study the conditions in which they lived and the state of their handicrafts, and to revive such village arts and crafts as may be revived. Simultaneously with the creation of the A. I. V. I. A. was passed a resolution to the effect that future exhibitions should be organized by the Spinners' and the Village Industries Associations. This exhibition I am about to declare open today is the first of that kind.

As I have told you the whole conception here is mine, and yet I must confess that we are still far from bringing out that conception fully. It is an evidence of the organizers' wonderful industry, and yet it is not perfect of its kind. It was not humanly possible to achieve it during the time at their disposal. It is no easy job to bring village artisans from their villages. You will find here villagers from South India who perhaps don't know where they have come to:

It is the purpose of this exhibition to show that even this starving India of the villages is capable of producing things which we town-dwellers may use both to the villagers' and our own advantage.

This exhibition is not a spectacular show like its predecessors. Those earlier ones were bound to be big shows. They were designed for a different purpose. Congress expenses were generally found out of the takings of the exhibition. The whole outlook was changed last year. We decided not to have things of spectacular interest, but we decided to give the spectators a glimpse of the Indian villager and his craft. This, therefore, is a vast educative effort. Not that we will have no takings this time. Only they will depend on those Congressmen who are intent on freedom and will win it by rehabilitating the village. If they will establish a living bond between towns and villages, they will flock to the exhibition and will make a point of studying the various demonstrations in the exhibition.

This cannot be done by one visit only. You should visit it daily and carefully study every section. If you will do this, you will marvel at the energy and industry expended in organizing it. You will be deeply interested in it if you approach it in a spirit of service. You will find here craftsmen and craftswomen from Kashmir and South India, from Sind and Assam, and learn how they earn their scanty living. You will find that it is within your power to add a little to their income and to enable them to have a square meal, if only you will make up your minds to pay for their wares enough to ensure them a living wage.

You will not expect me to describe all or even one of the numerous sections of the exhibition. It is impossible for me to do so. Let me tell you that you will have an inkling of the inside even from where you are sitting. For in front of you are no triumphal arches but there are simply but exquisitely decorated walls done by Shri Nandalal Bose, the eminent artist from Shantiniketan and his co-workers who have tried to represent all the villagers' crafts in simple artistic symbols. And when you go inside the art gallery

on which Babu Nandalal Bose has lavished his labours for weeks, you will feel, as I did, like spending there hours together. But even the other sections will attract you. You may not find in the exhibition anything to amuse you like music or cinema shows, but I assure you you will find much to learn.

In conclusion I want you all to be voluntary advertising agents of the exhibition so that numbers may be attracted to see it. The exhibition has not been organized for the villagers, it is organized for the city-dweller to enable him to see how the villager lives and what he is capable of. The Reception Committee has spent something like Rs. 35,000 in order to bring this exhibition into being. The least that you must do is to enable them to meet the expenses. This you can do if you become their enthusiastic advertising agents. Commission I can promise none, though I dare say you will get it for work dutifully done when you appear before the Great White Throne. I may tell you that I am staying here for some days and expect to visit the exhibition as often as I can. I shall therefore know how you have discharged your trust.

It is our intention to throw the exhibition open to the people from villages if the expenses are covered.

You will find in the exhibition many a drawback, but you and I are to blame for them, not the villagers. Let me tell you, however, that the organizers have attempted the stupendous task of achieving in a few weeks the work which should take many months to be properly done. You will therefore bear with us and forgive the shortcomings you will no doubt see.

Harijan, 4-4-1936

TRUE PATRIOTISM

[Gandhiji's speech at Lucknow exhibition on the morning of the 12th April 1936, which he was asked to deliver at half an hour's notice, seemed to be a kind of eye-and-ear-opener for our Peter Bells. He actually appealed to them to go and visit the exhibition, once, twice, three times, even four times, with their eyes and ears open, and if possible with the eyes and ears of their souls open. They would then see miracles in the exhibition. He said:]

"When I told you the other day that the exhibition was not a cinema show, I meant more than I said. When you go to a cinema show you meet with things there to captivate in a sensual way your eyes and ears. I may tell you that we have tried to boycott from this exhibition everything that had no educative value. We have tried to make the exhibition a sacred and a holy place, a feast for your eyes and ears, a spiritual feast capable of purifying the senses. I shall tell you why. Do you know Orissa and its skeletons? Well, from that hunger-stricken, impoverished land of skeletons have come men who have wrought miracles in bone and horn and silver. Go and see these things not only ready-made but in the making, and see how the soul of man even in an impoverished body can breathe life into lifeless horns and metal. A poor potter has also worked miracles out of clay. Things which I thought would be worth several annas, are worth only a copper or a couple of coppers, and yet they are delicate little pieces of art. A dear sister purchased the other day a little 'Krishna' in ivory. She was not given to worshipping Lord Krishna, but she now tells me that she has begun to worship the exquisite little form.

"The exhibition is thus not a spectacular show but a kind of fairyland. But our tastes have been so debased that miracles happening before our very eyes appear like so much dust or clay and trifles coming from abroad become exquisite pieces of art, water from a spring in far-off

Europe with the witchery of an unintelligible name becomes invested with miraculous quality, while the water of the holy Ganges which is said to be a purifier and a natural disinfectant seems to be no better than water from a dirty pool."

[Towards the close of the speech, which was constantly disturbed by men and women cramped for want of space and perspiring in the sun, Gandhiji who had begun with a prosaic note became passionately eloquent, and addressed this appeal to those whom the miracles in the exhibition failed to stir with emotion. — M. D.]

"If a vision of the kind I have described to you fails to stir your hearts and urge you to make some little sacrifice for the ill-fed and the underfed, God help you. Iqbal, whose poem *Hindustan Hamara* still stirs our hearts with emotion, must have had some such vision before his mind's eye when he described India with her eternal sentry the Himalayas and Ganges the eternal witness of the numerous stages through which our civilization has passed. We attend flag hoisting ceremonies and are proud of our National Flag. Let me tell you that our pride has no meaning if you do not like things made in India and hanker after foreign ones. It is idle for those whose heart is not stirred at the sight of things made by our poor craftsmen and craftswomen and to make a little sacrifice for them to talk of Independence for India."

Harijan, 18-4-1936

A VILLAGERS' EXHIBITION

[I give below a resume of Gandhiji's speech on the occasion of opening the *Khadi* and Village Industries Exhibition on the 25th of December, 1936, at Faizpur. All kinds of reports of this speech have appeared in the Press, as of the more important speech on the 26th, and all kinds of meanings have been put not only on his words but even on his gestures. The speech on the 25th was pitched in a lower key and was full of humorous little bits. At one stage he picked up one article after another and exhibited them to the audience. Someone in the audience could not see the fox-hide that Gandhiji had in his hand. He shouted: "Please put up your hand." Gandhiji answered back: "Wait, I shall put it up properly, later on," — meaning thereby that he would sell the hide and claim a fancy price for it. Of course there was not time left for this profitable pastime which had to be abandoned. But this sentence has been interpreted to mean that he had something up his sleeve. A *Times of India* report says: "Those who imagine that Mr. Gandhi is a spent force are sadly mistaken; he has something up his sleeve. He was loudly cheered when incidentally he said: 'I have not yet revealed my hand. Wait until I do so.'" Well he had nothing up his sleeve, for the simple reason that he has no sleeve !

— M. D. |

You must have seen from the newspapers that the responsibility for having this session of the Congress in a village is wholly mine. They had also announced that I would go to Faizpur in the beginning of December and supervise all the arrangements about the exhibition. The latter half of the statement is true, and without any false modesty or exaggeration I would say that I am wholly responsible for whatever shortcomings you see here. The idea of having the Congress and the exhibition in a village originated with me, and I must shoulder the responsibility for whatever defects or shortcomings you will notice here. The credit for anything good that you will see belongs to those who were in charge of the arrangements here. It was

Dastane and Dev who accepted my suggestion to have the Congress and the exhibition in a village, and with the thoroughness and determination that characterize the Maharashtritis they have carried out their promise. The exhibition was bound to be according to my conception because it is organized by the All India Spinners' Association of which I am the president and the All India Village Industries Association which I am guiding and directing. I had to warn them against creating a Lucknow or Delhi in a Maharashtra village. Why not in that case have the Congress and the exhibition both in Poona? But if they were to be in a village, they must be in keeping with an Indian village. And no one could do it better than I, because as I said to them I had long been a villager by choice, whereas they had become villagers only recently. Of course, I too settled in Segaon only a few months ago, and as I was actually born and bred and educated in a town, my body found it difficult to adjust itself automatically to village life. I had, therefore, malaria there. But, as you know, I threw it off immediately, recovered quickly, and am alive and kicking. Part of the reason of course is that I am now care-free, having cast all my cares on the broad shoulders of Jawaharlal and the Sardar. However, let me yield up the real secret of my health, which is that my body happens to be where I had set my heart.

Credit for the arrangements here belongs to the architect Shri Mhatre and the artist Shri Nandalal Bose. When Nanda Babu responded to my invitation a couple of months ago I explained to him what I wanted, and left it to him to give concrete shape to the conception. For he is a creative artist and I am none. God has given me the sense of art but not the organs to give it concrete shape. He has blessed Shri Nandalal Bose with both. I am thankful that he agreed to take upon himself the whole burden of organizing the artistic side of the exhibition, and he came and settled down here some weeks ago to see to everything himself. The result is that the whole Tilaknagar is an exhibition in itself, and so it begins not where I am going to open it but at the main gateway which is a fine piece

of village art. Of course our thanks are due also to Shri Mhatre, who has spared no pains in bringing the entire plan to completion. Please remember that Nanda Babu has depended entirely on local material and local labour to bring all the structures here into being.

Now I want you to go and see the exhibition with, if possible, my eyes. If you will realize that it is organized under the auspices of the A. I. S. A. and A. I. V. I. A., you will know what to expect there. The object of the former is to make the whole of India *khadi*-clad, a goal which we are unfortunately still far from having reached. The object of the latter is to revive the moribund cottage industries of India. Both *khadi* and the other cottage industries are vital to the economic welfare of our villages.

This exhibition is no spectacular show, it is not intended either to dazzle the eyes of the public or to delude them. This is a genuine village exhibition which has been brought into being by the labour of villagers. It is a pure educative effort. It simply shows the villagers how to double their income if only they will use their hands and feet and the resources around them. I would ask our President to take me to a village in U. P., and I would offer to reconstruct the village not out of Jamnalalji's money but with the help of the hands and feet of the men and women living there, on condition that he induces the villagers to work according to instructions. Our President will perhaps say that as soon as these poor folk begin adding to their income a zamindar like Jamnalalji would enhance the rent and thus rob the extra income out of their hands. Well, we will not allow the zamindar to do anything of the kind. There is no doubt in my mind that in a country like ours, teeming with millions of unemployed, something is needed to keep their hands and feet engaged in order that they may earn an honest living. It is for them that *khadi* and cottage industries are needed. It is clear to me as daylight that they are badly needed at the present moment. What the future has in store for them I do not know, nor do I care to know.

[With this he proceeded to describe some of the exhibits that had been placed before him—small tools from the blacksmith's smithy which had been made overnight, articles made by Andhra workmen out of grass growing on river banks (e. g. pouches and spectacle-cases), fox's hide, cured and tanned and lined with *khadi* at the Wardha tannery, and so on.]

These little things add substantially to the income of the poor villagers. If you can ensure them three annas instead of the three pice that they get today, they will think they have won Swaraj. That is what *khadi* is trying to do for the spinners today.

In brief we have to teach them how to turn waste into wealth, and that is what the exhibition is meant to teach them. When I met Nanda Babu two months ago I asked him not to bring from Shantiniketan costly paintings from his own school of art, lest untimely rain should ruin them. He accepted my advice and has collected things from the neighbourhood of this place. He launched out to the villages with the eye of an artist that is his, and picked up numerous things from the peasants' household, things that never catch an ordinary eye as striking objects of art, but which his discerning eye picked up and arranged and thus clothed with a new meaning.

Shri Vaikunth Mehta has apologized for the small size of the exhibition as compared with the previous ones, but there was no occasion for apology. It does not contain one superfluous exhibit, and the crafts represented mean so much additional production. Look, for instance, at the samples of hand-made paper out of *munj* grass, banana bark and bamboo. Bamboo has indeed played a prominent part in all the structures you see here, and you may be sure that after this Congress camp breaks up all the bamboo will be turned to good account.

You could not but have noticed the grand simplicity of the procession that was organized for our President, especially the beautifully designed and decorated chariot drawn by six pairs of bullocks. Well, all that was designed

in order to prepare you for what awaited you here. No city amenities or comforts, but everything that poor villagers could provide. The place is thus a place of pilgrimage for us all, our Kashi and our Mecca, where we have come in order to offer our prayers for freedom and to consecrate ourselves to the nation's service. You have not come here to lord it over the poor peasants but learn how to get off their backs by participating in their daily toil, by doing the scavenger's job, by washing for yourselves, by grinding your own flour, etc. For the first time in the history of the Congress you are being given here rice unpolished of its substance and *chapati* made out of hand-ground flour, plenty of fresh air, and clean mother earth to rest your limbs upon. But you will please bear with all the poor organizers' shortcomings, for in Khansaheb's language we are all Khudai Khidmatgars -- servants of God, come here not to take but to tender service.

Harjan, 2-1-1937

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AN ANNUAL TRAINING SCHOOL

| Speech at Haripura Exhibition on 10th February, 1938 |

When an exhibition of this kind was first opened at Lucknow I said that our exhibitions should be schools of instruction. Since then we have been progressing successfully towards the ideal and the exhibition I have just now been through and am declaring open is such an annual training school. It is not, as exhibitions of old used to be, a place of entertainment. It is a place of instruction for the hundreds of thousands of those who will be visiting it during the week or two that it will be on. It provides to the poor man who visits it a kind of provision for the next year's journey. It arms him with knowledge of an occupation which can carry him and his family through for the next year by working at it for eight hours. It ensures the training in securing an honest livelihood to

everyone who will use his or her hands and feet, no matter how ignorant or illiterate he or she may be.

I have spent an hour this morning at the exhibition. Please don't think for a moment that there should be nothing new in it for one who is the President of the All India Spinners' Association and who is guiding the All India Village Industries Association. Even if you think so, I am not such a simpleton as to entertain the belief. I would like to spend not one hour but hours there learning something new every moment. But I confess that I should not be able to earn my livelihood from an occupation that I might pick up there. At the present moment I am begging my livelihood, which perhaps is inevitable for one like me. But I am sure that it is possible for any able-bodied man or woman to pick up ONE of the many processes exhibited here as a means of honest livelihood.

I have often said that if seven lakhs of the villages of India were to be kept alive, and if peace that is at the root of all civilization is to be achieved, we have to make the spinning wheel the centre of all handicrafts. Thus my faith in the spinning wheel is growing every day, and I see it more and more clearly that the Sun of the wheel will alone illumine the planets of other handicrafts. But I go a step further and say that just as we go on discovering new stars and planets in the vast solar system, even so we should go on discovering fresh handicrafts every day. But for the sake of this thing we have to make the spinning wheel the really life-giving Sun. I made the spinning wheel in every home a necessary condition for the inauguration of satyagraha in Bardoli in 1921, and though I knew that the condition was far from being satisfied, I yielded to the importunations of the late Vithalbhai and inaugurated the satyagraha, with what followed you know very well. Well, I would even today ask the people of Bardoli to fulfil that condition of one wheel in every home. That will help you to eke out your small income and make you self-sufficient.

NEED FOR A STANDARD WAGE

The following questionnaire to its agents and others has been issued by the A. I. V. I. A., the answers to reach the Central Office, Wardha, before the 1st of August next :

"It has been proposed that we should insist on the village artisan getting an adequate return for his labour in connection with all articles produced or sold under the aegis of the A. I. V. I. A. For this purpose it will be necessary to fix a working wage standard. Such standard should be the same for either sex for equal quality of work. It may be based on an eight hour day with a prescribed minimum output. Such wage will enter into the cost, and the price should be fixed in relation to this. Ordinarily we may not be able to fix the prices in the competitive market, but we may do so for articles which do not enter into competition and for goods chosen for their special virtues which are appreciated by the consumers.

This questionnaire is sent out to invite your opinion on the following points :

1. Do you think it feasible to fix a minimum daily wage and ensure it to the workers by fixing prices ?

2. Should we fix our ultimate standard and work up towards it, or should we start with a low minimum and then raise it as we proceed ?

3. On what basis should it be arrived at ? Can you suggest a subsistence wage taking into consideration only food for the time being, as clothing should be made by personal effort " Will half an anna per hour be too low ? "

Associations like the A. I. S. A. and the A. I. V. I. A. and such philanthropic institutions may not follow the commercial maxim of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest. The A. I. S. A. has certainly tried to buy in the cheapest market. Of this, however, in another column. Wishing to give the A. I. V. I. A. the benefit of my experience of the evolution of *khadi*, I initiated a discussion about the wages received by the artisans working under its influence. The result was the questionnaire.

It has already been discovered that the tendency among agents is to produce the required articles at as low prices as possible. Where may the axe be laid if not upon the artisan's earnings? Unless, therefore, a minimum rate be fixed, there is every danger of the village artisan suffering, though it is for his sake that the A. I. V. I. A. has been brought into being.

We have exploited the poor patient villagers far too long. Let not the A. I. V. I. A. intensify the exploitation under the guise of philanthropy. Its aim is not to produce village articles as cheap as possible; it is to provide the workless villagers with work at a living wage.

It has been argued that anything that may raise the price of articles made in the villages will defeat the purpose for which the A. I. V. I. A. has been brought into being, for, it is said, nobody will buy the village articles if the prices are too high. Why should the price of an article be considered too high, if it only provides a living wage for the manufacturer? The buying public has to be instructed to know the abject condition of the people. If we are to do justice to the toiling millions, we must render to them their due; we must pay them a wage that will sustain them; we must not take advantage of their helplessness and pay a wage that would hardly give them one full meal.

It is quite clear that the Association must refuse to compete with mill manufactures. We may not take part in a game in which we know we must lose. In terms of metal, the big combines, whether foreign or indigenous will always be able to outbid the effort of the human hand. What the Association seeks to do is to substitute false and non-human economics by true and human. Not killing competition but life-giving co-operation is the law of the human being. Ignoring the emotion is to forget that man has feeling. Not the good of the few, not even the good of the many, but it is the good of all that we are made to promote if we are 'made in His own image'.

A philanthropic body like the A. I. V. I. A. cannot shirk consideration of the problems involved in the

questionnaire. If the true solution appears to be impracticable, it must be its endeavour to make it practicable. Truth is ever practicable. Thus considered the programme of the Association may fitly be called adult education.

And if the Association is to secure for the artisan under its care a living wage, it must also pry into his domestic budget, and trace the course of every coin that is paid.

The most difficult question to determine would be the minimum or the living wage. I have suggested eight annas for eight hour's strenuous labour converted into a given quantity of the particular goods turned out by an artisan of good ability. Eight annas is a mere token representing a certain quantity of necessities of life. If in a family of five there are two full workers, they would earn at the proposed rate Rs. 30 per month, allowing no holiday and no sickness gap. Thirty rupees per month is no extravagant income for five mouths. The method here proposed necessarily ignores the distinction of sex or age. But every referee will draw upon his own personal experience and report accordingly

Harjan, 13-7-1935

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INDIAN INDUSTRY

The question is often asked, what is an Indian Industry ? It is asked generally regarding Indian exhibitions. Formerly it used to be claimed that any industry that was conducted in India was an Indian Industry. Thus a mill manned by non-domiciled Europeans bringing capital, skilled man-power and machinery from abroad was considered to be an Indian Industry even though it could be proved to be harmful to the masses. From that we have travelled a long distance. An industry to be Indian must be demonstrably in the interest of the masses. It must be manned by Indians both skilled and unskilled. Its capital and machinery should be

Indian, and the labour employed should have a living wage and be comfortably housed, while the welfare of the children of the labourers should be guaranteed by the employers. This is in ideal definition. Only the A. I. S. A. and the A. I. V. I. A. can perhaps barely satisfy that definition. For even these Associations have much leeway to make up. Nevertheless complete conformation to the definition is their immediate goal.

But between that definition and the one that was the vogue even with the Congress before 1920 there are many shades of definitions. The Congress definition has generally been all goods other than mill cloth manufactured in India. The great mill industry may generally be claimed to be an Indian industry. But, in spite of its ability to compete with Japan and Lancashire, it is an industry that exploits the masses and deepens their poverty in exact proportion to its success over *khadi*. In the modern craze for wholesale industrialization, my presentation has been questioned, if not brushed aside. It has been contended that the growing poverty of the masses, due to the progress of industrialization, is inevitable, and should therefore be suffered. I do not consider the evil to be inevitable, let alone to be suffered. The A. I. S. A. has successfully demonstrated the possibility of the villages manufacturing the whole of the cloth requirement of India simply by employing the leisure hours of the nation in spinning and the anterior processes. The difficulty lies in weaning the nation from the use of mill cloth. This is not the place to discuss how it can be done. My purpose in this note was to give my definition of Indian Industry in terms of the millions of villagers, and my reasons for that definition. And it should be plain to everyone that national exhibitions should only be for those industries which need public support in every way, not those which are flourishing without the aid of exhibitions and the like, and which organize their own exhibitions.

TRUE SWADESHI

If I have to use the adjective 'true' before Swadeshi, a critic may ask, 'Is there also false Swadeshi?' Unfortunately I have to answer yes. As, since the days of *khadi*, I am supposed to be an authority on Swadeshi, numerous conundrums are presented to me by correspondents. And I have been obliged to distinguish between the two kinds of Swadeshi. If foreign capital is mixed with indigenous, or if foreign talent is mixed with indigenous, is the enterprise Swadeshi? There are other questions too. But I had better reproduce the definition I gave to a minister the other day. "Any article is Swadeshi if it subserves the interest of the millions, even though the capital and talent are foreign but under effective Indian control." Thus *khadi* of the definition of the A. I. S. A. would be true Swadeshi even though the capital may be all foreign and there may be Western specialists employed by the Indian Board. Conversely, Bata's rubber or other shoes would be foreign though the labour employed may be all Indian and the capital also found by India. The manufactures will be doubly foreign because the control will be in foreign hands and the article, no matter how cheap it is, will oust the village tanner mostly and the village *mochi* always. Already the *mochi* of Bihar have begun to feel the unhealthy competition. The Bata shoe may be the saving of Europe; it will mean the death of our village shoe-maker and tanner. I have given two telling illustrations, both partly imaginary. For in the A. I. S. A. the capital is all indigenous, and the whole of the talent also. But I would love to secure the engineering talent of the West to give me a village wheel which will beat the existing wheels, though deep down in me I have the belief that the improvements that indigenous talent has made are by no means to be despised. But this is a digression. I do hope that those ministers and others who guide or serve the public will cultivate the habit of distinguishing between true and false Swadeshi.

THE GIANT AND THE DWARF

The reader's attention is invited to Shri Walchand Hirachand's letter* published elsewhere. It has undergone some corrections in order to represent my views correctly.

* 'EQUALITY OF RIGHTS'

19th March, 1931

My dear Mahatmaji

With reference to the interview, which the representatives of several industries had with you on Tuesday afternoon, I find that misleading reports of what took place at the said interview have appeared in the Press as will be observed from the cutting enclosed herein. Having regard to the grave importance of the subject I feel it is quite essential that the correct version should be placed before the public. What my friends and I understood you to say could be summarized as follows:

"I am not in a position to say at this stage whether the Congress representatives will attend the Round Table Conference or not, but you can rest assured that the Congress is with you in your protest against this demand for so-called equality of rights made at the Round Table Conference.

Whatever other countries might have done or not done, India should take such steps to protect and develop her industries as it might suit best her own interests.

"That the right of the future Indian Parliament to discriminate between Nationals and non-Nationals whenever Indian interests require it, shall remain intact and unimpaired.

"The claim of Europeans to be treated as a minority community needing protection is untenable.

'No one has any right to pick up a paragraph from the Nehru report and fling it in our face when other parts of the report are discarded.

'I would advise you to carry on propaganda in connection with this important matter.

"As regards the report of the statement said to have been made by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru about the paragraph appearing in the Nehru report of the definition of Citizenship, it should be read together with the interpretation given by Pandit Motilal Nehru on the floor of the Assembly and the decision taken by the All Parties Convention at Calcutta on the subject of the definition of a 'Citizen'."

This to my mind is the gist of your advice to us. If you think that we have understood you correctly as stated above, I shall feel obliged if you will be good enough to give me permission to publish this letter.

Your sincerely,
Walchand Hirachand

The discussion to which the letter refers arose out of the formula that 'there should be no discrimination between the rights of the British mercantile community, firms and companies trading in India and the rights of Indian born subjects.' The formula reads innocent enough, but it covers the most dangerous position.

The situation today is this. The Britisher is the top-dog and the Indian the under-dog in his own country. In the administration of the country, the Indian generally is a mere clerk. In business he is at best a commission agent getting hardly 5 per cent against his English principal's 95 per cent. In almost every walk of life the Englishman by reason of his belonging to the ruling class occupies a privileged position. It can be said without fear of contradiction and without any exaggeration that he has risen upon the ruin of India's commerce and industries. The cottage industry of India had to perish in order that Lancashire might flourish. The Indian shipping had to perish so that British shipping might flourish. In a word we were suppressed in order to enable the British to live on the heights of Simla. It was not a mere picturesque expression of Gokhale's when he said that our growth was stunted. To talk then of no discrimination between Indian interests and English or European is to perpetuate Indian helotage. What is equality of rights between a giant and a dwarf? Before one can think of equality between unequals, the dwarf must be raised to the height of the giant. And since millions living on the plains cannot be translated to the heights of Simla, it follows that those entrenched in those heights must descend to the plains. The process may seem harsh, but it is inevitable if the millions of the plains are to be equals of the privileged few.

It is to be feared, therefore, that before we reach the state of equality, the levelling process will have to be gone through. Justice demands this. It will be a misnomer to call the process one of racial discrimination. There is no such question. There is room enough in our country for every British man, woman and child, if they will shed their privileged position and share our lot. They must then exchange

the British army and the force of the cities for the goodwill of a whole nation, which is at their disposal for the asking. Our goodwill is the truest safeguard that we can offer to them, and I make bold to say that it will be infinitely better and more dignified for both of us. In the process there will be apparent discrimination felt everywhere. It need not be felt by those who realize that the present is a wrong and unnatural position. To show that no racial discrimination is involved in this demand one has only to state that Indians who occupy entrenched positions behind their British patrons will also be expected to come to the level of their brethren of the plains. The true formula, therefore, should be this. In order to remove the existing unnatural inequalities the privileges of the ruling class and those others who have shared them shall be reduced so as to reach a state of equality between all classes and communities.

On the Indian side it must be a point of honour with us to hold British lives and honour as sacred as our own. This does not, need not, mean the ruin of British trade or interest. Those who are resident can rely on their disciplined habits, trained intellect, great industry, and powers of organization to carve out for themselves careers of distinction all the while serving the country of their adoption with the loyalty they have tendered to their own motherland.

British trade where it is not hurtful to India's interest can be placed, when we reach a state of honourable association, on a favoured basis. And an India free from exploitation from within and without must prosper with astonishing rapidity. With growing prosperity, her wants must grow. With her growing wants must grow also her imports. If at that time Britain is a partner or ally, she may well become India's chief supplier.

That is a dream I should love to realize. I have been party to the settlement for the realization of that dream. I seek every Englishman's help to enable India to gain that end. My notion of *Purna Swaraj* is not isolated independence but healthy and dignified independence. My nationalism, fierce though it is, is not exclusive, is not

wear shoes made out of Indian leather only, even if it is comparatively dearer and of an inferior quality in preference to cheaper and superior quality foreign leather shoes. Similarly I would condemn the introduction of foreign molasses of sugar if enough of it is produced in India for our needs. It will be thus clear from the above that it is hardly possible for me to give an exhaustive catalogue of foreign articles whose importation in India ought to be prohibited. I have simply inculcated the general principle by which we can be guided in all such cases. And this principle will hold good in future too so long as the conditions of production in our country remain as they are today.

Young India, 15-11-1928

29

KHADI AND SWADESHI*

We often think that we have carried out the full message of Swadeshi when we have adopted *khadi*. We treat it as a passport for the use of everything else from non-Indian sources and for the introduction of the latest fashions from Paris. This is a travesty of Swadeshi and a denial of the message of *khadi*. Whilst *khadi* is an obligation for all time in India, surely it is equally an obligation to use India-made things wherever we can get them even though they may be inferior to foreign articles. There are several Swadeshi things on the market which are in danger of disappearance for want of patronage. They may not be up to the mark. It is for us to use them and require the makers to improve them wherever improvement is possible. The rule of the best and the cheapest is not always true. Just as we do not give up our country for one with a better climate but endeavour to improve our own, so also may we not discard Swadeshi for better or cheaper foreign things. Even as a husband who being dissatisfied with his simple-looking wife goes in search of a better-looking woman is disloyal to his

* From an article entitled *In Andhradesh*.

partner, so is a man disloyal to his country who prefers foreign-made things, though better, to country-made things. The law of each country's progress demands on the parts of its inhabitants preference for their own products and manufactures.

Young India, 30-5-1929

30

SOME QUESTIONS

Q. You say machinery has been the bane of civilization. Then why do you allow yourself to travel in railway trains and motor cars?

A. There are certain things which you cannot escape all at once, even whilst you are avoiding them. This earthy case in which I am locked up is the bane of my life, but I am obliged to put up with it and even indulge it as this friend knows. But does he seriously doubt that the machine age was responsible for the organized murders during the late war? Asphyxiating gas and such other abominations have not advanced us by an inch.

Q. Is the economic law that man must buy in the best and the cheapest market wrong?

A. It is one of the most inhuman among the maxims laid down by modern economists. Nor do we always regulate human relations by any such sordid considerations. An Englishman pays more (and rightly) for the English collier in preference to cheap (say) Indian labour. Any attempt to introduce cheap labour into England will lead to a revolution. It would be sinful for me to dismiss a highly paid faithful servant because I can get a more efficient and cheaper servant although the latter may be equally faithful. The economics that disregard moral and sentimental considerations are like wax work that, being lifelike, still lack the life of the living flesh. At every crucial moment, these new-fangled economic laws have broken down in practice. And nations or individuals who accept them as guiding maxims must perish. There is something noble in the self-

denial of the Mussalman who will pay more for food religiously prepared or a Hindu who will decline to take food unless it is ceremonially clean. We lost when we began to buy our clothing in the cheap markets of England and Japan. We will live again, when we appreciate the religious necessity of buying our clothes prepared by our own neighbours in their cottages.

Young India, 27-10-1921

31

THE MACHINERY METHOD

The writer begs the question when he calls the method of machinery enlightened and that of the hand ignorant. It has still to be proved that displacement of the hand by the machine is a blessing in every case. Nor is it true that that which is easy is better than that which is hard. It is still less proved that every change is a blessing or that everything old is fit only to be discarded.

I hold that the machinery method is harmful when the same thing can be done easily by millions of hands not otherwise occupied. It is any day better and safer for the millions spread in the seven hundred thousand villages of India scattered over an area nineteen hundred miles long and fifteen hundred broad that they manufacture their clothing in their own villages even as they prepare their own food. These villages cannot retain the freedom they have enjoyed from time immemorial, if they do not control the production of prime necessities of life. Western observers hastily argue from Western conditions that what may be true of them must be true of India where conditions are different in so many material respects. Application of the laws of economics must vary with varying conditions.

The machinery method is no doubt easy. But it is not necessarily a blessing on that account. The descent to a certain place is easy but dangerous. The method of the

hand is a blessing, in the present case at any rate, because it is hard. If the craze for the machinery method continues, it is highly likely that a time will come when we shall be so incapacitated and weak that we shall begin to curse ourselves for having forgotten the use of the living machines given to us by God. Millions cannot keep themselves fit by games and athletics. And why should they exchange the useful, productive, hardy occupations for the useless, unproductive and expensive games and exercises? They are all right today for a change and recreation. They will jar upon us when they become a necessary occupation in order that we may have the appetite for eating the food in the production of which we had no hand or part.

Lastly, I do not subscribe to the belief that everything old is bad. Truth is old and difficult. Untruth has many attractions. But I would gladly go back to the very old Golden Age of Truth. Good old brown bread is any day superior to the pasty white bread which has lost much of its nutritive value in going through the various processes of refinement. The list of old and yet good things can be endlessly multiplied. The spinning wheel is one such thing, at any rate, for India.

When India becomes self-supporting, self-reliant, and proof against temptations and exploitation, she will cease to be the object of greedy attraction for any power in the West or the East, and will then feel secure without having to carry the burden of expensive armament. Her internal economy will be India's strongest bulwark against aggression.

Young India, 2-7-1931

INDUSTRIALISM

"What is your view about the industrialization of India ? "

"Industrialism is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind. Exploitation of one nation by another cannot go on for all time. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors. It is because these factors are getting less and less every day for England that its number of unemployed is mounting up daily. The Indian boycott was but a flea-bite. And if that is the state of England, a vast country like India cannot expect to benefit by industrialization. In fact India when it begins to exploit other nations — as it must, if it becomes industrialized — will be a curse for other nations, a menace to the world. And why should I think of industrializing India to exploit other nations? Don't you see the tragedy of the situation, viz. that we can find work for our 300 millions unemployed, but England can find none for its three millions and is faced with a problem that baffles the greatest intellects of England? The future of industrialism is dark. England has got successful competitors in America, Japan, France and Germany. It has competitors in the handful of mills in India, and as there has been an awakening in India, even so there will be an awakening in South Africa with its vastly richer resources natural, mineral and human. The mighty English look quite pigmies before the mighty races of Africa. They are noble savages after all, you will say. They are certainly noble but no savages, and in the course of a few years the Western nations may cease to find in Africa a dumping ground for their wares. And if the future of industrialism is dark for the West, would it not be darker still for India ? "

DEPLORABLE

Shri J. C. Kumarappa, writing in the *Gram Udyog Patrika*, says that to rely on or encourage imports from abroad is wholly wrong in principle. In the matter of the expected shortage of sugar owing to the failure of winter rains in the U. P. and Bihar and by frost in the Punjab and N. W. F. P. he suggests that the deficit in sugar should be made good by tapping palm trees in jungle areas for *nira* and preparing *gur* and sugar from it.

In regard to the import of a primary necessity like kerosene oil, he suggests further extraction of vegetable oils to meet our needs. Imports will entail export of some of our own production to pay for them, and will only cause further distress in the long run.

He also draws attention to the insidious scheme for development of Virginia cigarette tobacco in Bihar sponsored by Sir Herbert Stewart (Vice-Chairman of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research). Under the scheme a number of research stations on tobacco are to be opened in various places and the Imperial Tobacco Company have given two studentships of £500 per annum for training in tobacco cultivation abroad. At such a time the obvious duty of a government should have been not to waste good money or time on tobacco research, but to devote both to reclaim all available land for food cultivation. But Imperial Councils can only think in terms of either tobacco, long staple cotton or thick rind sugarcane for mills and groundnut for export, and thus serve foreign business masquerading as "India Ltd."

Harijan, 28-4-1946

MINISTERS' DUTY

It is legitimate to ask what Congress ministers will do for khaddar and other village industries now that they are in office. I should broaden the question and apply it to all the Provincial Governments of India. Poverty is common to all the provinces and so are means of alleviation in terms of the masses. Such is the experience of both the A. I. S. A. and the A. I. V. I. A. A suggestion has been made that there should be a separate minister for the work, as, for proper organization, it will occupy all the time of one minister. I dread to make the suggestion, for we have not yet outlived the English scale of expenditure. Whether a minister is separately appointed or not, a department for the work is surely necessary. In these times of scarcity of food and clothing, this department can render the greatest help. The ministers have experts at their disposal through the A. I. S. A. and the A. I. V. I. A. It is possible to clothe today the whole of India in *khadi* on the smallest outlay and in the shortest time possible. Each Provincial Government has to tell the villages that they must manufacture their own khaddar for their own use. This brings in automatic local production and distribution. And there will undoubtedly be a surplus for the cities at least to a certain extent which, in its turn, will reduce the pressure on the local mills. The latter will then be able to take part in supplying the want of cloth in other parts of the world.

How can this result be brought about?

The Governments should notify the villagers that they will be expected to manufacture khaddar for the needs of their villages within a fixed date after which no cloth will be supplied to them. The Governments in their turn will supply the villagers with cotton seed or cotton, wherever required, at cost price and the tools of manufacture also at cost, to be recovered in easy instalments payable in, say, five years or more. They will supply them with instructors

wherever necessary and undertake to buy surplus stock of khaddar, provided that the villagers in question have their cloth requirements supplied from their own manufacture. This should do away with cloth shortage without fuss and with very little overhead charges.

The villages will be surveyed and a list prepared of things that can be manufactured locally with little or no help and which may be required for village use or for sale outside, such for instance, as *ghani*-pressed oil and cakes, burning oil prepared through *ghanis*, hand-pounded rice, *tadgud*, honey, toys, mats, hand-made paper, village soap, etc. If enough care is thus taken the villages, most of them as good as dead or dying, will hum with life and exhibit the immense possibilities they have of supplying most of their wants themselves and of the cities and towns of India.

Then there is the limitless cattle wealth of India suffering from criminal neglect. The Goseva Sangh, as yet not properly experienced, can still supply valuable aid.

Without the basic training the villagers are being starved for education. This desideratum can be supplied by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. The experiment was already commenced by Congress Governments but it was interrupted by the resignations of the Congress ministries. The thread can be easily resumed now.

Harijan, 28-4-1946

ALTERNATIVE TO INDUSTRIALISM

A correspondent writes :

" Do you then believe that industrialization of India — to the extent of India producing her own ships, locomotives, aeroplanes, etc. — is necessary? If not, will you kindly suggest the alternative means by which India shall discharge her responsibilities as a free and independent nation?

" If you believe in the establishment of such industries, who should, in your opinion, exercise control over the management and the profits that will accrue? "

I do not believe that industrialization is necessary in any case for any country. It is much less so for India. Indeed, I believe that Independent India can only discharge her duty towards a groaning world by adopting a simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottages and living at peace with the world. High thinking is inconsistent with complicated material life based on high speed imposed on us by Mammon worship. All the graces of life are possible only when we learn the art of living nobly.

There may be sensation in living dangerously. We must draw the distinction between living in the face of danger and living dangerously. A man who dares to live alone in a forest infested by wild beasts and wilder men without a gun and with God as his only Help, lives in the face of danger. A man who lives perpetually in mid-air and dives to the earth below to the admiration of a gaping world lives dangerously. One is a purposeful, the other a purposeless life.

Whether such plain living is possible for an isolated nation, however large geographically and numerically in the face of a world armed to the teeth, and in the midst of pomp and circumstance, is a question open to the doubt of a sceptic. The answer is straight and simple. If plain life is worth living, then the attempt is worth making even though, only an individual or a group makes the effort.

At the same time I believe that some key industries are necessary. I do not believe in arm-chair or armed

socialism. I believe in action according to my belief, without waiting for wholesale conversion. Hence, without having to enumerate key industries, I would have State ownership, where a large number of people have to work together. The ownership of the products of their labour, whether skilled or unskilled, will vest in them through the State. But as I can conceive such a State only based on non-violence, I would not dispossess moneyed men by force but would invite their co-operation in the process of conversion to State ownership. There are no *pariahs* of society, whether they are millionaires or paupers. The two are sores of the same disease. And all are men "for a' that".

And I avow this belief in the face of the inhumanities we have witnessed and may still have to witness in India as elsewhere. Let us live in the face of danger.

Haripur, 1-9-1946

36

VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

A friend, who is a thinker, writes in connection with village industries :

"Several of your ideas, good in themselves, are presented to the public in such a form as to call for a high standard of ethical sense in the people to whom they are addressed. The fact, however, is that the common man is actuated in his conduct only by necessity or self-interest. An economic order based on an appeal to sentiment or man's "higher nature" alone cannot last. The reason, why after all these years of effort the *khadi* programme has failed to show a more substantial result, lies in the fact that your followers, the British vested interests, the mill-owners and cloth dealers were all ruled by their essentially selfish human nature.

"I too want society to be based on high moral principles of honesty and straight dealing between man and man. But I feel that it is not possible till we can eliminate altogether

the spirit of commercialism or the profit motive. Just now there are so many controls—control over food, over transport and so on. The time is opportune for a big step forward.

“The Bombay Government has set up a committee for village industries. It includes Shri Manu Subedar, Shri Lakshmidas Asar and Shri Dhotre. My scheme is as follows :

“Taking each village or a group of two or three villages as a unit, the population can be divided into children, women, old people and able-bodied and healthy young folk. Then, there are those who are unfit to put in regular hours of work or work all the year round and lastly the unskilled lot, lacking means or skill or both for the pursuit of any particular vocation.

“Of these the children could easily be made to work for 3 to 4 hours a day, provided the work is not of a fatiguing nature. The remaining half of the day they could have to themselves for attending school.

“The children should be paid at the rate of one anna and the adults four annas per day from the day they begin to work. As they acquire more skill the wages of the children should be increased up to 5 annas and those of the adults up to 8 annas per day.

“The manufacture in one village should be confined to one kind of goods only, so that in about two months' time the workers will acquire skill and avoid making mistakes. The manufactured article should be such as can be utilized locally. The State should arrange to supply raw materials and appoint two or three experts to train the workers. The State should also undertake to popularize the manufactured goods and arrange for their transport and cheap distribution to the poor consumer.

“In the case of many articles thus manufactured the cost will be less than if they were manufactured in big factories. One reason for their cheapness would be the economy in wages. The savings should, therefore, be utilized for the benefit of the workers. If, as a result of the able-bodied people being more and more absorbed in agriculture railways and other such occupations, fewer hands are left for cottage crafts and production falls it would not matter.

" This scheme will enable millions to add to their income and make the two ends meet without throwing them on the unemployment dole or loss of self-respect. This social insurance scheme is in accordance with our Indian culture and is based on my personal experience of 35 years. It enables even men and women without any kind of special skill or previous training to eke out a living. Those who wish to earn more can take to more lucrative occupations, if they can find any. But none need feel stranded.

" The children can in this way not only be taught a craft but also get their education in addition. The expense should be charged to the scheme.

" Some features of the scheme are :

" It converts a large proportion of unskilled labour in the country into skilled labour.

" By bringing transport, stores, accounts etc. under State control, we eliminate completely the commercial motive from a vast field of the average man's life.

" One or two crores of men, women and children engaged under this scheme would put 25 to 50 lakhs of rupees into their pockets every day and thus millions will feel the glow of new life.

" The labour that is at present going to waste will be utilized for producing goods worth one to two crores per year.

" The State will obtain raw materials at the cheapest rates by buying straight from the producers. Whatever the State buys would be bought at cost price.

" Should a problem arise calling for consultation with a specialist or a technical expert, his services should be requisitioned for a specified period and he should be paid remuneration for that period.

" The man who is engaged to keep stores, accounts etc. should be made responsible for the education of the children as well. After two or three years, the education should be carried on by the monitor system, that is to say, the senior boys should teach the junior ones and the teacher should teach the senior boys only.

" This teacher should also keep about 50 commonly used drugs. For instance, allopathic drugs like Tr. iodine

and *ayurvedic* drugs like myrobalan supplied by the State to each village, along with the relevant literature. These drugs should be sold to the villagers at the cheapest rates.

"The following is a list of some of the household articles that can be manufactured in this way :

" Cloth	Match sticks
Paper	Empty tins made of
Pencils, pen holders, etc.	cardboard and tin
Articles made out of	Litho-label printing
wire, pins etc.	<i>Masala</i>
Soap	<i>Papad, vadī, etc.</i>
Earthenware	Cots
Pottery	Combs
Buttons	Brushes, broom-
Glassware -- bangles	stricks etc.
Registers, book-binding	Pen-knives, table-knives
Agricultural Implements	scissors, etc.
<i>Gur</i>	Leather goods
Nails	Ink
Hair Oil	Glue
Boot Polish	Lac
Metal Polish	Musical instruments
Phenyle	Fountain pens
Caps	Bicycles, parts of
<i>Chappals</i>	watches
Utensils of daily use	Stockings, banyan, etc.
String, cord, straps	Candles
Toys	Mirrors
Small wooden articles	Play things."

The above letter presents a fascinating picture and deserves careful consideration. One thing is obvious. The writer has given the first place to cloth. It is the only article in the list of universal use. The various processes involved in *khadi* production can engage millions of adults and children and enable them to earn a fair amount. This includes the weavers. The weavers live in the cities today. The middleman exploits them. If the people's Government could supply them with all the yarn they require, it would simplify things for them and put their vocation on a stable

basis. They would not then need to live in the cities. But this is beside the point.

My difficulties are two. One is whether it is possible to sell hand-made articles as cheaply as machine-made ones. The second is that out of the articles that have been enumerated in the scheme there are hardly any, except *khadi*, which can become universal. They will not, in a large measure, be consumed locally and so will have to be sold in the cities. This is as it should be. The villagers should develop such a high degree of skill that articles prepared by them should command a ready market outside. When our villages are fully developed there will be no dearth in them of men with a high degree of skill and artistic talent. There will be village poets, village artists, village architects, linguists and research workers. In short there will be nothing in life worth having which will not be had in the villages. Today the villages are dung heaps. Tomorrow they will be like tiny gardens of Eden where dwell highly intelligent folk whom no one can deceive or exploit.

The reconstruction of the villages along these lines should begin right now. That might necessitate some modification of the scheme. The reconstruction of the villages should not be organized on a temporary but permanent basis.

My second difficulty is that in the scheme under question craft and education have been divorced from each other. Craft, art, health and education should all be integrated into one scheme. *Nayi Talim* is a beautiful blend of all the four and covers the whole education of the individual from the time of conception to the moment of death. Therefore, I would not divide village uplift work into watertight compartments from the very beginning but undertake an activity which will combine all four. Instead of regarding craft and industry as different from education I will regard the former as the medium for the latter. *Nayi Talim*, therefore, ought to be integrated into the scheme.

SWADESHI

[The following is from Gandhiji's post-prayer speech on 20-6-'47. — S. N.]

I am told that with the advent of Swadeshi raj in the shape of Swaraj, the spirit of Swadeshi is fast disappearing from the land. The stock of *khadi* is perhaps at its lowest. It is no unusual sight to see what are called Gandhi *topis* worn by men who are otherwise clad in *paradeshi*. If that is true on any large scale, the dearly loved liberty, in my opinion, would be short-lived. Goodbye then to the hope of India becoming the Light of Asia, as by right it should be. *Paradeshi* goes side by side with luxury which a correspondent says is rampant everywhere. I fondly hope that whilst the tragic picture might be true of the cities of India, it is not so of the villages, if only because they were famishing.

Immediately after my return to India in 1915 I discovered that the centre of Swadeshi lay in *khadi*. If *khadi* goes, I contended even then, there is no Swadeshi. I have shown that the manufactures in Indian mills do not constitute Swadeshi. To that belief I cling even today.

Think of the bonfire of foreign cloth we had during our first national struggle. Shri Sarojini Naidu and Pandit Motilal Nehru threw their fineries in it. Pandit Motilal Nehru later wrote from jail that he had found true happiness in the simplicity and purity of *khadi*. It is sad that that spirit does not exist today. The charkha is in the centre of our tricolour flag. It is the symbol of unity and the non-violent strength of the millions. The yarn spun by the charkha, I consider to be the cementing force which can bind those whom the three colours of the flag represent. That is why I have said that the whole fabric of Swaraj hangs on a thread of the handspun yarn and have called the charkha our mightiest weapon. Where is that wheel today?

I have already reminded you that if you have the Swadeshi spirit in you, you will refuse to look to the West for the supply of your major wants. I have no quarrel in this time of extreme scarcity if India imports foodstuffs

and cloth from outside, provided it is proved that India is wholly unable to supply the two wants from within India. This is in no way proved. I have not hesitated to say and I would repeat that India is fully able to manufacture her own *khadi* and grow her own foodstuffs in her numerous villages. But alas! the people have become too lazy to look inward and to insist on supplying these two wants from within India's borders. I will go even so far as to say that I will face starvation and nakedness rather than look to the West to supply the two needs. Without grim determination it is not possible to do the right thing.

Harizan 29-6-1947

38

TRUE MEANING OF SWADESHI

Q Can a man serve his immediate neighbours and yet serve the whole of humanity? What is the true meaning of Swadeshi?

A Gandhiji said that the question had been answered by him on the previous evening. He believed in the truth implicitly that a man could serve his neighbours and humanity at the same time, the condition being that the service of the neighbours was in no way selfish or exclusive, i.e. did not in any way involve the exploitation of any other human being. The neighbours would then understand the spirit in which such service was given. They would also know that they would be expected to give their services to their neighbours. Thus considered, it would spread like the proverbial snowball gathering strength in geometrical progression encircling the whole earth.

It followed that Swadeshi was that spirit which dictated man to serve his next door neighbour to the exclusion of any other. The condition that he had already mentioned was that the neighbour thus served had in his turn to serve his own neighbour. In this sense Swadeshi was never exclusive. It recognized the scientific limitation of human capacity for service.

Q. The Government has been introducing schemes of industrializing the country for the maximum utilization of her raw materials, not of her abundant and unused man-power which is left to rot in idleness. Can such schemes be considered Swadeshi?

A. Gandhiji remarked that the question had been well put. He did not exactly know what the Government plan was. But he heartily endorsed the proposition that any plan which exploited the raw materials of a country and neglected the potentially more powerful man-power was lopsided and could never tend to establish human equality.

America was the most industrialized country in the world and yet it had not banished poverty and degradation. That was because it neglected the universal man-power and concentrated power in the hands of the few who amassed fortunes at the expense of the many. The result was that its industrialization had become a menace to its own poor and to the rest of the world.

If India was to escape such disaster, it had to imitate what was best in America and the other western countries and leave aside its attractive looking but destructive economic policies. Therefore, real planning consisted in the best utilization of the whole man-power of India and the distribution of the raw products of India in her numerous villages instead of sending them outside and rebuying finished articles at fabulous prices.

Harijan, 23-3-1947

RIGHT OR WRONG ?

Among my correspondence there is a typical letter in Gujarati from which I give below the following summary :

" In the *Young India* of 15th September, 1927 A. D., in your Madras speech reported therein, you have said that that which is opposed to true economics is not religion and that economics which are inconsistent with religion are not true and should, therefore, be denounced.

" I am aware that you have held the view for many years, but it has not commanded universal acceptance. Therefore, it seems to me that your devoting your time and energy to the abatement of atrocities being committed in the name of religion is not proper. Where is your constructive programme today ? The National Congress has the reins of Government in the best part of India. Complete political independence is in our hands. The British power has quitted. In such a case, is it not well that you should devote your energy to the prosecution of the constructive programme and through it demonstrate to the country that religion and economics are not two opposites ? . . . You write nothing against the unmoral economics of India. The consequence is that credulous people have begun to believe that you are behind the present economic policy of the Congress Government. I have begun to believe that you, who are the creator of the constructive programme, are now destroying it. So far as I know, there is not a single institution about *khadi* or village industries which are based on true economics and on principles of self-sufficiency."

This writer has written in a moment of excitement. Therefore, he has not been able to express the whole truth. The main fact is that communal unity is a vital part of my being. It was so when *khadi* and all the village industries were not even conceived by me. At the time communal unity possessed me, I was a lad twelve years old, just a beginner in English. It was then that I had realized that all Hindus and Muslims and Parsis were

I have repeated times without number that for national work it is not necessary that national workers should have political power. But it is necessary for the people to keep in constant touch with those whom they put in power. These can easily be counted. They are too few. But if the people were to realize their power and use it wisely and well, things would right themselves. Our independence is a new born baby eighteen days old. It is inconceivable that things would of themselves be arranged harmoniously. Moreover, those who have been placed in power are themselves new to this vast administrative work. They are assiduously adapting themselves to it.

Calcutta, 4-9-'47

(*Adapted from the original in Gujarati*)

Harijan, 14-9-1947

PART II

RURAL EXHIBITIONS

(*By Mahadev Desai*)

Quite a novel experiment was started by the A. I. V. I. A. by having a small exhibition at Maganwadi, to which admission was kept deliberately free, in order to enable those who had not been to Lucknow to have an idea of what the Lucknow exhibition must have been like. A number of charts and fresco-panels were brought from the Lucknow exhibition, and the main industries have of course been there on the premises. But it was not as well attended as it should have been. The people have yet got to be educated. Most of the village folk who come to Wardha come either in search of work or come to the weekly market to sell their vegetables and other products and to buy their weekly provisions. They have neither the time nor the inclination to go to an exhibition and have not the knowledge of letters to follow our charts. We shall have to take our exhibitions to their doors, suit our times to their times, and make our charts intelligible enough for them. But the Wardha exhibition was more for the people of Wardha than for those from the villages. The people of Wardha have in general adopted an attitude of disinterested detachment to the new-fangled experiments around them and are more or less like Peter Bells. Even as there are many villages in India, there are many Wardhas too. Gandhiji's remarks in declaring the exhibition open were addressed to these town people.

"As I was coming to Maganwadi," he said, "I saw the weekly bazaar that is held here every Sunday. That bazaar has the raw produce as well as manufactures from raw produce exhibited in abundance. This exhibition has these exhibited on a very humble scale. I therefore wondered how our exhibition compared with the weekly bazaar. The fundamental difference is that the exhibition is held entirely with a view to service of the village and the town folk,

whereas the bazaar is a business concern in which the villager is exploited. He is made to sell his wares as cheap as possible, often even below cost price. At this exhibition there is hardly any buying and selling. This exhibition is an attempt to educate the residents of Wardha in their duty towards the villages surrounding them, and to educate the villagers in what is possible for them to better themselves in every way. The exhibition teaches them how to keep their villages clean, what food to eat, and how to improve their industries and thus earn a little more than they do today. So far as the town-dweller is concerned the exhibition forcibly brings to his mind the various ways in which he is exploiting the villager, and how best he may serve the villager by going in for his wares. The Lucknow exhibition opened the eyes of those who visited it to the wonderful capacity of our village craftsmen, and even this will do so somewhat. I may tell you here that, though the admission here has been kept free, at Lucknow it was not free. Reports have been published that the exhibition there resulted in a heavy loss. They are wrong. The receipts from the sale of tickets exceeded Rs. 25,000. There were besides receipts from stall-holders. It is just possible that there will be a nominal profit. Those around Lucknow will not see such an exhibition in Lucknow for years to come. The Kumbha Mela recurs at long but regular intervals. The Congress and the exhibition may not be held again at the same place, and even if it is, it may be held at an indefinitely long interval, especially because the tendency, I hope, now will be to select not big cities but small towns for their venue. But local exhibitions like this should be inexpensive annual efforts of growingly educational value. The village oilman has, for instance, deteriorated nowadays. He adulterates the oil with cheap and spurious stuffs. He will learn here how it is profitable to make the oil absolutely pure and unadulterated. The paper-maker will learn here how to make the paper neat and lasting. As time passes we should be able to show improvements in these processes. I know that we have been able to produce little effect during the year on our surroundings or on the villages in the

neighbourhood But that does not disappoint me We have to plod on Those of you who have come here have to go forth to the villages as advertising agents and to draw the villagers to such exhibitions The tragedy today is that the town-dweller is becoming increasingly indifferent to the villages, that he even believes that the villages are going to be destroyed in the near future They certainly will be, if we continue to prefer mill-made articles to hand-made ones Those of you who have come here have to go out as preachers of the gospel of rural-mindedness

"A factory employs a few hundreds and renders thousands unemployed I may produce tons of oil from an oil mill, but I also drive thousands of oilmen out of employment I call this destructive energy, whereas production by the labour of millions of hands is constructive and conducive to the common good. Mass production through power-driven machinery, even when State-owned, will be of no avail

"But why not, it is asked, save the labour of millions, and give them more leisure for intellectual pursuits? Leisure is good and necessary up to a point only God created man to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, and I dread the prospect of our being able to produce all that we want, including our foodstuffs, out of a conjurer's hat."

Harjan, 16-5-1936

ABOUT MACHINERY

(*By Mahadev Desai*)

Ramachandran now turned to the next question 'Are you against all machinery, Bapuji?'

'How can I be,' he answered, smiling at Ramachandran's naive question, 'when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery? The spinning wheel itself is a machine; a little toothpick is a machine. What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all. I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might.'

'Then, Bapuji,' said Ramachandran with eagerness, 'you are fighting not against machinery as such, but against its abuses which are so much in evidence today?'

'I would unhesitatingly say "yes"; but I would add that scientific truths and discoveries should first of all cease to be the mere instruments of greed. Then labourers will not be overworked and machinery instead of becoming a hindrance will be a help. I am aiming, not at eradication of all machinery, but limitation.'

Ramachandran said, 'When logically argued out, that would seem to imply that all complicated power-driven machinery should go.'

'It might have to go' admitted Gandhiji, 'but I must make one thing clear. The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man. For instance, I would make intelligent exception. Take the case of the Singer sewing machine. It is one of the few useful things ever invented, and there is a romance

about the device itself. Singer saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her own hands, and simply out of his love for her he devised the sewing machine, in order to save her from unnecessary labour. He, however, saved not only her labour but also the labour of everyone who could purchase a sewing machine.'

'But, in that case,' said Ramachandran, 'there would have to be a factory for making these Singer sewing machines, and it would have to contain power-driven machinery of ordinary type.'

'Yes,' said Gandhiji, smiling at Ramachandran's eager opposition. 'But I am socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalized, or State-controlled. They ought only to be working under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for profit, but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as the motive. It is an alteration in the conditions of labour that I want. This mad rush for wealth must cease, and the labourer must be assured, not only of a living wage, but a daily task that is not a mere drudgery. The machine will, under these conditions, be as much a help to the man working it as to the State, or the man who owns it. The present mad rush will cease, and the labourer will work (as I have said) under attractive and ideal conditions. This is but one of the exceptions I have in mind. The sewing machine had love at its back. The individual is the one supreme consideration. The saving of labour of the individual should be the object, and honest humanitarian considerations, and not greed, the motive. Thus, for instance, I would welcome any day a machine to straighten crooked spindles. Not that blacksmiths will cease to make spindles; they will continue to provide the spindles; but when the spindle gets wrong every spinner will have a machine of his own to get it straight. Therefore, replace greed by love and everything will come right.'*

Young India, 13-11-1924

* From an article entitled 'A Morning with Gandhiji'

POSERS

(By Mahadev Desai)

A worker came with a number of questions which, though they had been discussed often enough, still continued to trouble him. "Why are we laying such an emphasis on *khadi* and wholesome foodstuffs, when you know that even before the advent of the British *khadi* was there and our good foodstuffs were there, and yet we were in no better case?" was his first question.

"This question," said Gandhiji, "was discussed threadbare in the columns of *Young India* and *Navajwan* if you read them. But I shall sum up the reply for you. We had *khadi*, but we did not know its significance; we were self-contained, but without realizing its necessity. There was little intelligence behind *khadi* and our handicrafts, and we little realized that they sustained us. Therefore, when they were lost to us we did not miss them, and today when an attempt is being made to restore them, some of us are wondering what use there could be in their restoration."

"Then that means that political education and propaganda is needed, and you have tabooed this."

"No political propaganda is needed to teach people the lesson of self-help, of reform in their diet, and of throwing off their inertia and making the best of their idle hours."

"My difficulty," said the worker, "is this, that though people in our villages are working like asses from morning until night without an hour's respite they do not get enough to eat. And you are asking them to labour still more!"

"What you say is news to me. The villages I know are those in which quantities of time are being wasted. But if as you say there are people who are being over-worked, I am asking such people to accept nothing less than a living wage for nothing more than eight hours' work."

"But why not accept the machine with all its good points, eliminating the bad ones?"

"I cannot afford to keep our human machines idle. We have such an amount of human power lying idle that we have no room for other power-driven machines."

"Introduce the power-driven machine and get them to work for only as long as is needed for our purposes."

"How do you mean? Supposing X produced all the cloth we needed, in mills specially constructed for the purpose, and gave work to say three million men, also distributing all the profit between them, what then? Then these three million men will be having all the money that used to be distributed between 300 million a hundred years ago."

"No, sir," argued the friend, "I propose that our men should not work more than is necessary for our purposes. Some work is indeed necessary for all of us, but why should we work, say, more than a couple of hours a day, and not devote the rest of our time to pleasant occupations?" (The talk was all in Hindustani and I am giving the objector's argument as best I can.)

"So you would be satisfied if our men were to work only for one hour a day?"

"That should be worked out. But I should certainly be satisfied."

"Well there's the rub. I should never be satisfied until all men had plenty of productive work, say eight hours a day."

"But why, I wonder, should you insist on this eight hours' minimum?"

"Because I know that millions will not employ themselves in work for the sake of it. If they did not need to work for their bread, they would lack the incentive. Supposing a few millionaires from America came and offered to send us all our foodstuffs and implored us not to work but to permit them to give vent to their philanthropy, I should refuse point-blank to accept their kind offer."

"That would be because the offer would hurt your self-respect?"

"No, not only because of that; but especially because it strikes at the root of the fundamental law of our being,

viz. that we must work for our bread, that we eat our bread by the sweat of our brow."

"But that is your personal view. Would you leave the organization of society to society itself, or would you leave it to a few good guides?"

"I should leave it to a few good guides."

"Which means that you are for a dictatorship."

"No, for the simple reason that my fundamental principle is non-violence and I should not coerce any individual or community. Guidance is not dictatorship."

The argument might have gone on to an exasperating length, but Gandhiji had no more time and the friend had to be content for the day.

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Apropos of this discussion, it may be worth while turning to Mr. L. P. Jacks' essay *The Science and Art of Leisure*, where he shows what a difficult science and art it is, and how it is impossible to achieve both without mastering the science and art of Labour. Mr. Bertrand Russel, who considers ample leisure for the citizen to be one of the essentials of a successful social system, reduces the working hours to four per day -- thank God he does not, like our friend in the foregoing dialogue, reduce them to an hour a day! But Mr. Jacks thinks that Mr. Russel simplifies the problem too much and forgets that "the leisure of the first man would get considerably interfered with by the doings of others," for "we spend a great deal of our leisure in mutual botheration." "Moreover," remarks Mr. Jacks, laying his finger on the sorest spot, "account has to be taken of the fact that one's leisure-time is precisely that part of life where Beelzebub finds his most promising opportunities. One can imagine the rejoicings in Beelzebub's quarter of the universe if the working hours were reduced to four per diem." And then Mr. Jacks attempts a definition of 'leisure' and defines it as "that part of a man's life where the struggle between white angles and black for the possession of his soul goes on with the greatest intensity", and gives a few statistics

"which may help us to form an idea of the way people nowadays distribute their leisure-time between the cultivation of their souls and the cultivation of something else." He takes them from a little volume called *Books* by R. L. Duffus:

"We are told that 115 million people in the United States attend the 'movie' theatres every week, and that in this way they spend as much money in three weeks as the entire population spends on books in a year. The total national expenditure on books is given as 200 million dollars per annum. The total national expenditure on pleasure-touring in motor cars is 3,000 million dollars. The American public pays for books one-half of one per cent of its annual income. As a result of elaborate calculations Mr. Duffus concludes that the 'average American' buys two books and borrows two from the library every year. From an official bulletin issued by the American Government we get the following: 'The national bill for candy is 27 times as large as the national bill for books; for the movies 22 times, for the wireless 12½ times; for 'soft drinks' 11 times. The amount spent by the Americans on hard drinks is not mentioned. These figures, of course, require careful interpretation. Not all the books that are bought or borrowed can be classed as tending to the cultivation of the soul. On the other hand, the leisure occupations indicated by the rest of the figures must not be set down indiscriminately as having no cultural value, though certainly there is not much in 'candy' on which Americans spend 27 times what they spend on books. But when an allowance has been made for all that, the figures on the whole seem to strengthen my contention that just now Beelzebub is going strong at the leisure end of our civilization."

These are American facts. As for England, Mr. Jacks gives an example from one of the Lancashire towns:

"Outside an establishment devoted to the newly invented sport of greyhound racing there was an immense crowd waiting for the gates to open in the middle of the morning, and on making inquiry I was informed that the vast majority were the unemployed. Many of the mills in

the neighbourhood had closed down, but the greyhound racing industry was doing a roaring business. Some days afterwards I met a gentleman prominent in the W. E. A. and asked him whether the increased leisure of the district had caused an increase in the demand for the classes and courses of lectures his movement had to offer. He said it had not. There were too many counter-attractions. And he mentioned greyhound racing as one."

As for India one may safely say that most of the riots and destructive activities that are in evidence at the present day are the work of those who have no work to do. A study in criminal statistics would be most instructive from the point of view of the employment of leisure hours, but I am quite sure no one has yet been able to demonstrate the wrongness of the old adage that Satan always finds enough mischief for idle hands to do.

Harian, 7-12-1935 .

IN DEFENCE OF MACHINERY

(By Mahadev Desai)

A socialist holding a brief for machinery asked Gandhiji if the village industries movement was not meant to oust all machinery.

"Is not this wheel a machine?" was the counter-question that Gandhiji, who was just then spinning, asked in reply.

"I do not mean this machine, but I mean bigger machinery."

"Do you mean Singer's sewing machine? That too is protected by the village industries movement, and for that matter any machinery which does not deprive masses of men of the opportunity to labour, but which helps the individual and adds to his efficiency, and which a man can handle at will without being its slave."

"But what about the great inventions? You would have nothing to do with electricity?"

"Who said so? If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the State would own power houses, just as they have their grazing pastures. But where there is not electricity and no machinery, what are idle hands to do? Will you give them work, or would you have their owners cut them down for want of work?"

"I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all. There is a difference between invention and invention. I should not care for the asphixiating gases capable of killing masses of men at a time. The heavy machinery for work of public utility, which cannot be undertaken by human labour has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the State and used entirely for the benefit of the people. I can have no consideration for machinery which is meant either to enrich the few at the expense of the many, or without cause to displace the useful labour of many.

"But even you as a socialist would not be in favour of an indiscriminate use of machinery. Take printing presses. They will go on. Take surgical instruments. How can one make them with one's hand? Heavy machinery would be needed for them. But there is no machinery for the cure of idleness but this," said Gandhiji pointing to his spinning wheel. "I can work it whilst I am carrying on this conversation with you, and am adding a little to the wealth of the country. This machine no one can oust."

Harjan, 22-6-1935

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INTERPRETATION OF THE WARDHA EDUCATION SCHEME

(By Mahadev Desai)

Dr. John De Boer, who is in charge of an educational institution in South India, was on a visit to Wardha before starting on a long furlough. He has made a careful study of the Wardha educational scheme and had therefore useful discussions with Shri Aryanayakam and Shri Kakasaheb. He was keen on having a few minutes with Gandhiji too. He said, the scheme had appealed to him most strongly, because at the back of it was non-violence. His difficulty was why non-violence figured so little on the syllabus.

"The reason why it has appealed to you is quite all right," said Gandhiji. "But the whole syllabus cannot centre round non-violence. It is enough to remember that it emerges from a non-violent brain. But it does not presuppose the acceptance of non-violence by those who accept it. Thus, for instance, all the members of the Committee do not accept non-violence as a creed. Just as a vegetarian need not necessarily be a believer in non-violence — he may be a vegetarian for reasons of health—even so those who accept the scheme need not be all believers in non-violence."

"I know," said Dr. De Boer, "some educationists who will have nothing to do with the system because it is based on a non-violent philosophy of life."

"I know it. But for that matter I know some leading men who would not accept *khadi* because it is based on my philosophy of life. But how can I help it? Non-violence is certainly in the heart of the scheme, and I can easily demonstrate it, but I know that there will be little enthusiasm for it when I do so. But those who accept the scheme accept the fact that in a land full of millions of hungry people you cannot teach their children by any other method and that if you can set the thing going the result will be a new economic order. That is quite enough for me, as it is enough for me that Congressmen accept non-violence as a method for obtaining independence, but not as a way of life. If the whole of India accepted non-violence as a creed and a way of life, we should be able to establish a republic immediately."

"I see," said Dr. De Boer. "There is one thing now which I do not understand. I am a socialist, and whilst as a believer in non-violence the scheme appeals to me most, I feel as a socialist that the scheme would cut India adrift from the world, whereas we have to integrate with the whole world, and socialism does it as nothing else does."

"I have no difficulty," said Gandhiji. "We do not want to cut adrift from the whole world. We will have a free interchange with all nations, but the present forced interchange has to go. We do not want to be exploited, neither do we want to exploit any other nation. Through the scheme we look forward to making all children producers, and so to change the face of the whole nation, for it will permeate the whole of our social being. But that does not mean that we cut adrift from the whole world. There will be nations that will want to interchange with others because they cannot produce certain things. They will certainly depend on other nations for them, but the nations that will provide for them should not exploit them."

"But if you simplify your life to such an extent that you need nothing from other countries, you will isolate yourselves from them; whereas I want you to be responsible for America also."

"It is by ceasing to exploit and to be exploited that we can be responsible for America. For America will then follow our example and there will be no difficulty in a free interchange between us."

"But you want to simplify life and cut out industrialization."

"If I could produce all my country's wants by means of the labour of 30,000 people instead of 30 million I should not mind it, provided that the thirty million are not rendered idle and unemployed. I know that socialists would introduce industrialization to the extent of reducing working hours to one or two in a day, but I do not want it."

"They would have leisure."

"Leisure to play hockey?"

"Not only for that but for creative handicrafts for instance."

"Creative handicrafts I am asking them to engage in. But they will produce with their hands by working eight hours a day."

"You do not of course look forward to a state of society when every house will have a radio and everyone a car. That was President Hoover's formula. He wanted not one but two radios and two cars."

"If we had so many cars there would be very little room left for walking," said Gandhiji.

"I agree. We have about 40,000 deaths by accidents every year and thrice as many cases of people being maimed."

"At any rate I am going to live to see the day when all villages in India will have radios."

"Pandit Jawaharlal seems to think in terms of the economy of abundance."

"I know. But what is abundance? Not the capacity to destroy millions of tons of wheat as you do in America?"

"Yes, that's the nemesis of capitalism. They do not destroy now, but they are being paid for NOT producing wheat. People indulged in the pastime of throwing eggs at one another because the prices of the eggs had gone down."

"That is what we do not want. If by abundance you mean everyone having plenty to eat and drink and to clothe

himself with, enough to keep his mind trained and educated, I should be satisfied. But I should not like to pack more stuff in my belly than I can digest and more things than I can ever usefully use. But neither do I want poverty, penury, misery, dirt and dust in India."

"But Pandit Jawaharlal says in his Autobiography you worship Daridranarayan and extol poverty for its own sake."

"I know," said Gandhiji, with a laugh.

Harizan. 12-2-1938

45

SWADESHI INDUSTRIES AND DISCRIMINATION

(By Mahadev Desai)

The discrimination clauses in the new Constitution have been the subject of much discussion of late, and naturally so. For that is one of the many vicious features of the new Constitution which make Federation unacceptable. There would seem to be no doubt about what Gandhiji meant when he insisted on the insertion of the words 'in the interests of India' in the Agreement which is now known as the Irwin-Gandhi Pact. An automatic commentary on the words was provided by the clause in the Agreement granting the right of Indians to picket all foreign cloth shops. Does the exclusion of all foreign cloth, which necessarily includes British cloth, mean discrimination against the British cloth manufactures? Lord Irwin did not think so. In the same way about all other industries which were killed or nearly killed in order that British industries may be reared on their ruin. In fact a friend draws my attention to the fact that whilst Lord Irwin recognized the principle in 1931, it was recognized as long ago as 1916 by Sir William Clarke, the then Member for Commerce and Industry of the Government of India. In supporting the resolution for the appointment of the Industrial Commission, he said: "The building up of industries where the capital, control and management should be in the hands of Indians is the special object we all have in view;" and he viewed with

disfavour a situation created by "the manufacturer who now competes with you from a distance," transferring "his activities to India and competes with you within your own country."

To make the whole thing clear once for all and to have Gandhiji's authoritative opinion on this matter and his definition of Swadeshi Industries, three representatives of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company had an interview with him at Segaon some days ago. They seemed to be worried by the following among a number of things :

1. The discrimination clauses. They cited from Gandhiji's article in *Young India* entitled *The Giant and the Dwarf* the following statements :

"To talk of no discrimination between Indian interests and English or European is to perpetuate Indian helotage. What is equality of rights between a giant and a dwarf? Before one can think of equality between unequals, the dwarf must be raised to the height of the giant.. It will be a misnomer to call the process one of racial discrimination. There is no such question. There is room enough in our country for every British man, woman and child if they will shed their privileged position and share our lot." And again : "In almost every walk of life the Englishman by reason of his belonging to the ruling class occupies a privileged position. It can be said without fear of contradiction and without exaggeration that he has risen upon the ruin of India's commerce and industries. The cottage industries of India had to perish in order that Lancashire might flourish. The Indian shipping had to perish, so that British shipping might flourish."

Is the shipping not to revive and rise to its full height in a free India ?

2. What are Indian or Swadeshi Companies ? It has become a fashion nowadays to bamboozle the unwary public by adding "(India) Limited " to full-blooded British concerns. Lever Brothers "(India) Limited " have their factories here now. They claim to produce swadeshi soap, and have already ruined several large and small soap factories in Bengal. Then there is the Imperial Chemicals (India)

Ltd. which has received valuable concessions. This is dumping foreign *industries* instead of foreign *goods* on us!

3. Then there are companies with Indian Directorate with British Managing Agents who direct the Directorate. Would you call a company with a large percentage of Indian capital and a large number of Indian Directors on the Board, but with a non-Indian Managing Director or non-Indian firm as Managing Agents, a Swadeshi concern?

Gandhiji dealt with these points fairly exhaustively in his reply which may be summarized below in his own words:

"1. On this point I am glad you have reminded me of my article written in 1931. I still hold the same views, and have no doubt that a Free India will have the right to discriminate — if that word must be used — against foreign interests, wherever Indian interests need it.

"2. As regards the definition of a Swadeshi company, I would say that only those concerns can be regarded as Swadeshi whose control, direction and management either by a Managing Director or by Managing Agents are in Indian hands. I should have no objection to the use of foreign capital, or to the employment of foreign talent, when such are not available in India, or when we need them, — but only on condition that such capital and such talents are exclusively under the control, direction and management of Indians and are used in the interests of India.

"But the use of foreign capital or talent is one thing, and the dumping of foreign industrial concerns is totally another thing. The concerns you have named cannot in the remotest sense of the term be called Swadeshi. Rather than countenance these ventures, I would prefer the development of the industries in question to be delayed by a few years in order to permit national capital and enterprise to grow up and build such industries in future under the actual control, direction and management of Indians themselves.

"3. Answer to this is contained in my answer on the second point."

MASS PRODUCTION v. PRODUCTION BY THE MASSES

(By Pyarelal)

"Revival of village industries and handicrafts is all right," remarked a young friend the other day, with the air of one making a big concession to the earnestness of his adversary's conviction rather than its correctness. "It will beautify life which our poor villagers badly need. But I very much doubt, sir, whether our 'expanding universe', as Mr. Jeans has put it, can do without mass production. No, sir, in 'mass production' coupled with mass control lies the only hope of the toiling millions. What has Gandhiji to offer in its place?"

The poser put me in mind of a conversation on the question of machinery that Gandhiji had with an American press correspondent in London during the second Round Table Conference. "Production by the masses," I replied, repeating an expression that Gandhiji had used on that occasion.

About a year prior to the meeting, the American friend in question had met Mr. Ford in America and, in the course of his talk with him, had among other things mentioned to him his view that the current European conditions were opposed to the continuance of mass production. Mr. Ford had replied that those conditions were bound to pass away in a short time and that a demand for cheaper things would soon spring up. "It is a question of raising the standard of living of the people," had concluded Mr. Ford.

"Do you feel, Gandhiji," asked the friend, "that mass production will raise the standard of living of the people?"

"I do not believe in it at all," replied Gandhiji. "There is a tremendous fallacy behind Mr. Ford's reasoning. Without simultaneous distribution on an equally mass scale, the production can result only in a great world tragedy. Take Mr. Ford's cars. The saturation point is bound to be reached soon or late. Beyond that point the production of cars cannot be pushed. What will happen then?"

"Mass production takes no note of the real requirement of the consumer. If mass production were in itself a virtue, it should be capable of indefinite multiplication. But it can be definitely shown that mass production carries within it its own limitations. If all countries adopted the system of mass production, there would not be a big enough market for their products. Mass production must then come to a stop."

"I wonder," proceeded the interlocutor, "whether you feel that this saturation point has already arrived in the Western world. Mr. Ford says that there never can be too many articles of quality, that the needs of the world are constantly increasing and that, therefore, while there might be saturation in the market for a given commodity, the general saturation would never be reached."

"Without entering upon an elaborate argument," replied Gandhiji, "I would categorically state my conviction that the mania for mass production is responsible for the world crises. Granting for the moment that the machinery may supply all the needs of humanity, still it would concentrate production in particular areas, so that you would have to go in a roundabout way to regulate distribution; whereas, if there is production and distribution both in the respective areas where things are required, it is automatically regulated, and there is less chance for fraud, none for speculation."

The American friend mentioned Mr. Ford's favourite plan of decentralization of industry by the use of electric power conveyed on wires to the remotest corner, instead of coal and steam, as a possible remedy, and drew up the picture of hundreds and thousands of small, neat, smokeless villages, dotted with factories, run by village communities. "Assuming all that to be possible," he finally asked Gandhiji, "how far will it meet your objection?"

"My objection won't be met by that," replied Gandhiji, "because while it is true that you will be producing things in innumerable areas, the power will come from one selected centre. That, in the end, I think, would be found to be disastrous. It would place such a limitless power in one human agency that I dread to think of it. The consequence

for instance, of such a control of power would be that I would be dependent on that power for light, water, even air, and so on. That, I think, would be terrible."

The friend was struck by the argument. "Mr. Gandhi," he remarked, "this is a particularly appropriate moment, it seems to me, for you to be visiting London, because, apart from the political questions, it seems to me to be a time when the Western world is disillusioned in regard to machinery in general, in regard to the mass production system we have built up in Germany and America in particular, and people are feeling somewhat bewildered and doubtful as to their value and asking themselves whether we have not, after all, overdone it. Have you any idea as to what Europe and America should do to solve the problem presented by too much machinery?"

"You see," answered Gandhiji, "that these nations are able to exploit the so-called weaker or unorganized races of the world. Once those races gain this elementary knowledge and decide that they are no more going to be exploited, they will simply be satisfied with what they can provide themselves. Mass production, then, at least where the vital necessities are concerned, will disappear."

"As a world organization?"

"Yes."

"But even these races will require more and more goods as their needs multiply."

"They will then produce for themselves. And when that happens, mass production, in the technical sense in which it is understood in the West, ceases."

"You mean to say it becomes local?"

"When production and consumption both become localized, the temptation to speed up production, indefinitely and at any price, disappears. All the endless difficulties and problems that our present day economic system presents, too, would then come to an end. Take a concrete instance. England today is the cloth shop of the world. It, therefore, needs to hold a world in bondage to secure its market. But under the change that I have envisaged, she would limit her production to the actual needs of her 45

millions of population. When that need is satisfied, the production would necessarily stop. It won't be continued for the sake of bringing in more gold irrespective of the needs of a people and at the risk of their impoverishment. There would be no unnatural accumulation of hoards in the pockets of the few, and want in the midst of plenty in regard to the rest, as is happening today, for instance, in America. America is today able to hold the world in fee by selling all kinds of trinkets, or by selling her unrivalled skill, which she has a right to do. She has reached the acme of mass production, and yet she has not been able to abolish unemployment or want. There are still thousands, perhaps millions, of people in America who live in misery, in spite of the phenomenal riches of the few. The whole of the American nation is not benefited by this mass production.

"The fault lies in distribution," observed the journalist friend. "It means that, whilst our system of production has reached a high pitch of perfection, the distribution is still defective. If distribution could be equalized, would not mass production be sterilized of its evils?"

"No," replied Gandhiji, "the evil is inherent in the system. Distribution can be equalized when production is localized; in other words, when the distribution is simultaneous with production. Distribution will never be equal so long as you want to tap other markets of the world to dispose of your goods. That does not mean that the world has no use for the marvellous advances in science and organization that the Western nations have made. It only means that the Western nations have to use their skill. If they want to use their skill abroad, from philanthropic motives, America would say, 'Well, we know how to make bridges, we won't keep it a secret, but we say to the whole world, we will teach you how to make bridges and will charge you nothing.' America says, 'Where other nations can grow one blade of wheat, we can grow two thousand.' Then, America should teach that art free of charge to those who will learn it, but not aspire to grow wheat for the whole world, which would spell a sorry day for the world indeed."

The American friend next asked Gandhiji, referring to Russia, whether it was not a country that had developed mass production without exploiting, in Gandhiji's sense, the less industrialized nations, or without falling into the pit of unequal distribution. "In other words", replied Gandhiji, "you want me to express opinion on State-controlled industry, i. e. an economic order in which both production and distribution are controlled and regulated by the State as is being today done in Soviet Russia. Well, it is a new experiment. How far it will ultimately succeed, I do not know. If it were not based on force, I would dote on it. But today since it is based on force, I do not know how far and where it will take us."

"Then, you do not envisage mass production as an ideal future of India?" questioned the American friend.

"Oh yes, mass production, certainly," replied Gandhiji, "but not based on force. After all, the message of the spinning wheel is that. It is mass production, but mass production in people's own homes. If you multiply individual production to millions of times, would it not give you mass production on a tremendous scale? But I quite understand that your 'mass production' is a technical term for production by the fewest possible number through the aid of highly complicated machinery. I have said to myself that that is wrong. My machinery must be of the most elementary type which I can put in the homes of the millions. Under my system, again, it is a labour which is the current coin, not metal. Any person who can use his labour has that coin, has wealth. He converts his labour into cloth, he converts his labour into grain. If he wants paraffin oil, which he cannot himself produce, he uses his surplus grain for getting the oil. It is exchange of labour on free, fair and equal terms—hence it is no robbery. You may object that this is a reversion to the primitive system of barter. But is not all international trade based on the barter system?"

"Look, again, at another advantage that this system affords. You can multiply it to any extent. But concentration of production *ad infinitum* can only lead to

unemployment. You may say that workers thrown out of work by the introduction of improved machinery will find occupations in other jobs. But in an organized country, where there are only fixed and limited avenues of employment, where the worker has become highly skilled in the use of one particular kind of machinery, you know from your own experience that this is hardly possible. Are there not over three millions unemployed in England today? A question was put to me only the other day: 'What are we doing today with these three million unemployed?' They cannot shift from factory to field in a day. It is a tremendous problem."

This brought the discussion to the employment of machinery in agriculture.

"Would not machine agriculture make a great difference to India, as it has to America and Canada?" asked the American friend.

"Probably," replied Gandhiji. "But that is a question I do not consider myself fit to answer. We in India have not been able to use complicated machinery in agriculture with profit so far. We do not exclude machinery. We are making cautious experiments. But we have not found power-driven agricultural machinery to be necessary."

The American friend, in common with the rest, had come imbued with the belief that Gandhiji was a sworn enemy of all machinery. "Some people have the impression," he remarked, "that you are opposed to machinery in general. That is not true, I believe."

"That is quite wrong," answered Gandhiji. "The spinning wheel is also machinery. It is a beautiful work of art. It typifies the use of machinery on a universal scale. It is machinery reduced to the terms of the masses."

"So you are opposed to machinery, only because and when it concentrates production and distribution in the hands of the few," finally summed up the American friend.

"You are right. I hate privilege and monopoly. Whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo to me. That is all," answered Gandhiji.

CONSTRUCTIVE WORK AND SAMAGRA GRAMASEVA

(*By Sushila Nayyar*)

On the 29th of January Gandhiji was asked a few questions in the Constructive Workers' Conference at Madras. Two of those questions and their answers are given below :

Q. Can a worker who has taken up one item of constructive work dabble in others? Is it right for him to do so? If so how?

A. Constructive programme as it stands today is comprised of 18 items. The spinning wheel as the symbol of non-violence occupies the central place. So every worker must spin and know all about spinning. Supposing a worker takes up paper-making as his main occupation and has to find his livelihood also through it, he won't have much time left for other things. But he will be able to render some other service to the villagers besides that which he renders through the spinning wheel and paper-making. For instance, he can work for improving the sanitation of the place and render advice about the care of the sick when he cannot take up full responsibility for nursing them.

Supposing another worker decides to concentrate on the spinning wheel only and to find his livelihood also through that, he can do so. I have no doubt in my mind that the wheel can serve as the instrument of earning one's livelihood and at the same time enable the worker to render useful service to his neighbours. The thing is that every worker should decide for himself what will be his main activity besides the spinning wheel and what will be his subsidiary activities. Whatever he does, he should do intelligently and with knowledge. Thus, in order to ply the wheel intelligently, he should know all the processes that precede and succeed spinning. He should have full knowledge of the activities that he wishes to concentrate upon and have a general working knowledge about other items

of the constructive programme. A student of astronomy cannot know astronomy without some knowledge of science in general. Similarly a worker cannot afford to be utterly ignorant about other items of constructive work.

Q. Please explain the meaning of Samagra Gramaseva of your conception. How can we fit ourselves for that?

A. The eighteenfold Constructive Programme includes Samagra Gramaseva. A Samagra Gramasevak must know everybody living in the village and render them such service as he can. That does not mean that the worker will be able to do everything single-handed. He will show them the way of helping themselves and procure for them such help and materials as they require. He will train up his own helpers. He will so win over the villagers that they will seek and follow his advice. Supposing I go and settle down in a village with a *ghanu* (village oil press), I won't be an ordinary *ghanchi* (oil presser) earning 15-20 rupees a month. I will be a Mahatma *ghanu*. I have used the word 'Mahatma' in fun but what I mean to say is that as a *ghanchi* I will become a model for the villagers to follow. I will be a *ghanchi* who knows the Gita and the Quran. I will be learned enough to teach their children. I may not be able to do so for lack of time. The villagers will come to me and ask me: "Please make arrangements for our children's education." I will tell them: "I can find you a teacher but you will have to bear the expenses." And they will be prepared to do so most willingly. I will teach them spinning and when they come and ask me for the services of a weaver, I will find them a weaver on the same terms as I found them a teacher. And the weaver will teach them how to weave their own cloth. I will inculcate in them the importance of hygiene and sanitation and when they come and ask me for a sweeper I will tell them: "I will be your sweeper and I will train you all in the job." This is my conception of Samagra Gramaseva. You may tell me that I will never find a *ghanchi* of this description in this age. Then I will say that we cannot hope to improve our villages in this age. Take the example of a *ghanchi* in Russia. After all the man who runs an oil mill is a *ghanchi*.

He has money but his strength does not lie in his money. Real strength lies in knowledge. True knowledge gives a moral standing and moral strength. Everyone seeks the advice of such a man. Take the instance of Vinoba. He is a good *ghanchi*. You all know what he does and you can all follow his example according to your capacity.

(*From Harijansevak*)

Harijan, 17-3-1946

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CONGRESS MINISTRIES AND RURAL UPLIFT

(*By Pyarelal*)

Resumption of office by Congress Ministers in the provinces is by no means an experiment in constitutionalism. The task before them is to realize the content of Independence for the masses which the Congress has envisaged. What should be the end of our economic policy and the nature of social organization that should be built up and what are the obstacles in the present economic and administrative organization in achieving the goal of rural prosperity these were the questions that the Ministers for Industries from the various provinces, who met in conference in the Council Hall at Poona on the 31st of July, set themselves to examine.

Gandhiji explained his approach to Village Industries in the course of a thirty minutes address. The conception underlying both the *Nai Talim* and the Village Industries programme, including khaddar, was rooted in the same thing viz. concern for the dignity and status of the village unit as against the big cities and of the individual against the machine. The concern was further augmented by the fact that India lives not in a handful of her big cities but in her 7,00,000 villages. The problem was of reestablishment of justice between the town and the village. As it was, the balance was heavily tipped in favour of the former to the disadvantage of the latter.

THE MACHINE AGE

"Ours has been described as the machine age," observed Gandhiji, "because the machine dominates our economy. 'Now, what is a machine?' one may ask. In a sense, man is the most wonderful machine in creation. It can neither be duplicated nor copied." He had, however, used the word not in its wider sense but in the sense of an appliance that tended to displace human or animal labour instead of supplementing it or merely increasing its efficiency. That was the first differential characteristic of the machine. The second characteristic was that there was no limit to its growth or evolution. That could not be said of human labour. There was a limit beyond which its capacity or mechanical efficiency could not go. Out of this circumstance arose the third characteristic of the machine. It seemed to be possessed of a will or genius of its own. It was antagonistic to man's labour. Thus it tended more to displace man, one machine doing the work of hundred, if not a thousand, who went to swell the army of the unemployed and the under-employed, not because it was desirable but because that was its law. In America it had perhaps reached the extreme limit. He had been opposed to it, said Gandhiji, not from today, but even before 1908 when he was in South Africa surrounded by machines. Their onward march had not only not impressed him but had repelled him. "It then dawned on me that to suppress and exploit the millions, the machine was the device par excellence, it had no place in man's economy if, as social units, all men were to be equal. It is my belief that the machine has not added to man's stature and it won't serve the world but disrupt it, unless it is put in its proper place. Then, I read Ruskin's *Unto This Last* during a train journey to Durban and it gripped me immediately. I saw clearly that if mankind was to progress and to realize the ideal of equality and brotherhood, it must adopt and act on the principle of *Unto This Last*; it must take along with it even the dumb, the halt and the lame. Did not Yudhishtira—the Prince of Righteousness, refuse to enter heaven without his faithful dog?"

MINISTRIES AND THE A. I. V. I. A.

In the machine age these had no place. Under it the fittest alone survived to the exclusion and at the cost of the weak. "That is not my picture of Independence in which there is room even for the weakest," observed Gandhiji. "That requires that we must utilize all available human labour before we entertain the idea of employing mechanical power."

It was with that background, that he was instrumental in founding the Talimi Sangh and the A. I. V. I. A. The object was to strengthen the Congress which claimed to be essentially the people's organization. The Congress had created these autonomous institutions. The Congress Ministries could requisition the services of these organizations always and without any compunction. They existed and laboured for the villagers who were the backbone of the Congress. But the Ministries were under no obligation. If they had no faith in what these organizations stood for, they should plainly say so through the Working Committee. To play with a thing when they had no heart in it, would be worse than useless. They should take it up, only if they believed with him that it alone held the key to the economic and political salvation of the country. They should not deceive themselves or others.

THE GOOD EARTH

The base and foundation of village industries was agriculture. "Years ago I read a poem in which the peasant is described as the father of the world. If God is the Provider, the cultivator is His hand. What are we going to do to discharge the debt we owe to him? So long we have only lived on the sweat of his brow. We should have begun with the soil but we could not do so. The fault is partly mine."

There were people, remarked Gandhiji, who said that no basic reform in agriculture was possible, without political power. They dreamt in terms of industrialization of agriculture by large scale application of steam and electricity. He warned them that trading in soil fertility for the sake of quick returns would prove to be a disastrous, short-sighted

policy. It would result in virtual depletion of the soil. Good earth called for the sweat of one's brow to yield the bread of life.

People might criticize that approach as being slow and unprogressive. I did not hold out promise of dramatic results. Nevertheless, maintained the speaker, it held the key to the prosperity of both the soil and the inhabitants living on it. Healthy, nourishing food was the *alpha* and *omega* of rural economy. "The bulk of a peasant's family budget goes to feed him and his family. All other things come afterwards. Let the tiller of the soil be well fed. Let him have a sufficiency of fresh, pure milk and ghee and oil, fish, eggs, and meat if he is a non-vegetarian. What would fine clothes, for instance, avail him, if he is ill nourished and underfed?" The question of drinking-water supply and other things would come next. A consideration of these questions would naturally involve such issues, as the place of plough cattle in the economy of agriculture as against the tractor plough and power irrigation etc. and thus, bit by bit, the whole picture of rural economy would emerge before them. In this picture cities would take their natural place and not appear as unnatural, congested spots or boils on the body politic as they were today. "We stand today in danger of forgetting the use of our hands," concluded Gandhiji. "To forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves. To think that your occupation of the ministerial chair will be vindicated if you serve the cities only, would be to forget that India really resides in her 7,00,000 village units. What would it profit a man if he gained the world but lost his soul into the bargain?"

Questions were then asked.

REMEDIES

Q. You have called cities boils or abscesses on the body politic. What should be done with these boils?

A. If you ask a doctor he will tell you what to do with a boil. It has to be cured either by lancing or by the application of plasters and poultices. Edward Carpenter

called civilization a malady which needed a cure. The growth of big cities is only a symptom of that malady. Being a nature curist, I am naturally in favour of nature's way of cure by a general purification of the system. If the hearts of the city-dwellers remain rooted in the villages, if they become truly village-minded, all other things will quickly heal.

Q. What practical steps can be taken to protect our village crafts from the invasion of foreign and Indian manufactured goods under the present circumstances?

A. I can only speak in broad terms. If you have felt in your heart that you have taken office as custodians and representatives of the interests of the masses, everything that you do, your legislation, your executive orders, the instructions that you issue, will breathe concern for the villager. To protect his interests, you do not need the Viceroy's sanction. Supposing you want to protect the hand-spinner and hand-weaver against the competition of mills and solve the problem of cloth shortage for the masses, you will put aside red tape and send for the millowners and tell them that, unless they want you to go out of office, they must make their production policy conform to the requirement of the masses, whose custodian and representative you are. You will tell them not to send mill cloth to certain areas, which are put under hand production or produce a certain range of yarns and textiles which come within the handloom weaver's domain. If you are in earnest, your word will go home and they will willingly give their co-operation as they did recently, when they provided the required textiles for export to Indonesia in return for Indonesian surplus rice for the relief of the Indian famine. But there must be that inner conviction first, everything else will then be all right.

Sevagram, 8-8-'46

Harijan, 25-8-1946

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